



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

PROPERTY OF  
*University of  
Michigan  
Libraries*

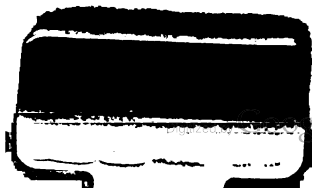
1817



---

ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS

---











# BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

A STUDY OF EMPEROR WILLIAM'S  
CHARACTER AND FOREIGN  
POLICY

BY

GEORGE SAUNDERS, B.A., LL.D.

"MORNING POST" CORRESPONDENT IN BERLIN, 1888-1897

"TIMES" CORRESPONDENT IN BERLIN, 1897-1908

"TIMES" CORRESPONDENT IN PARIS, 1908-1914

NEW YORK  
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

1914

DD

229

.526

**COPYRIGHT, 1914**

**BY**

**E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY**

**The Knickerbocker Press, New York**



## PREFACE

WILLIAM II., German Emperor and King of Prussia, has loomed large in the eye of the European public throughout the period of his reign, or for close upon twenty-seven years. He has alternately commanded admiration and inspired mistrust or hostility. The view of his policy, its motives and its methods, which has been generally taken in Great Britain, has not, until quite recently—perhaps not until the outbreak of the Great War—approximated to that which is developed in the following pages. The writer's view was formed in all essentials about the time of Count Caprivi's fall, in 1894, and it was confirmed, he felt, by

## PREFACE

close observation of the Emperor's words and actions during long residence in Berlin. Twenty years' study of the subject in that capital convinced him that his conception of the Emperor's policy and methods was shared in many respects by a good number of the more impartial of the Emperor's own subjects. Many of the manifestations of the Emperor's personality and of his aims have seemed to the writer, as to not a few Germans, to be a constant menace to the peace of the world. Ideas which might have been comparatively harmless when expressed by German professors, historians, and essayists, were perilously brought into the arena of international politics when enunciated by the head of the German Empire and the Commander-in-Chief of its armies. Nor did the Imperial exponent of these ideas ever seem adequately to realize the truth and wisdom of the German poet's words:

## PREFACE

*Leicht bei einander wohnen die Gedanken,  
Doch hart im Raume stossen sich die Sachen.*

(Ideas side by side are easy house-mates,  
Realities in this world are wont to clash.)

Or, as Burns puts it, more concisely than  
Schiller:

Facts are chiels that winna ding.

G. S.

*October, 1914.*



# CONTENTS

| CHAPTER  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I.—GERMANY AT THE EMPEROR'S ACCESSION . . . . .                    | I    |
| II.—ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II. . . . .                               | 30   |
| III.—WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY . . . . .                      | 65   |
| IV.—WILLIAM II. AND GERMAN WORLD-POLICY . . . . .                  | 106  |
| V.—WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY:<br>CHECKS AND DISASTERS . . . . . | 136  |
| VI.—THE LAST STAGE . . . . .                                       | 174  |



# **“Builder and Blunderer”**

---

## **I**

### **GERMANY AT THE EMPEROR'S ACCESSION**

THE death of the first German Emperor on March 9, 1888, at the age of ninety-one, closed a great epoch of German and European history. Bismarck has described him as the ideal of a Prussian nobleman—firm, courteous, simple in his habits, and faithful to his friends and his servants. His grandson, the subject of these pages, has canonized him under the title of “William the Great.” But the epithet has never taken root as it did in the cases of the “Great” Frederick of Prussia or the “Great” Elector of Brandenburg. William I. had indeed greatness of a

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

kind which the world does not readily recognize. He had a lofty equanimity in evil fortune and in good—in distress and exile as a boy with his heroic mother, Queen Luise; at Memel, after the disaster of Jena in 1806; in England, after the revolutionary outbreak of 1848; at Versailles, in the Hall of Mirrors, when he was proclaimed German Emperor by the assembled German Sovereigns, on January 18, 1871. Above all, he had no misconceptions as to his own limitations. He knew himself to be a typical Prussian officer, and he regarded the Prussian officer as the highest military type in the world. But he never conceived himself to be a great European statesman; while he had the precious faculty of trusting completely the Minister in whom he recognized the highest statesmanship—Bismarck —and backing him through thick and thin. Once and again in his last years he wrote on the margin of the dis-



## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

couraged Chancellor's request to be relieved of office the decisive word "Never." Much might be said about the character of William I., its virtues and its limitations. All that need be emphasized here is that his personality, however eminent and revered it had become as the centre of the events which re-established the greatness of his nation, was not of the kind which actively seeks to attract attention to itself in its own interest or in that of the cause which it represents. The aged Emperor was, nevertheless, as beloved as he was honoured, and when he was borne amid a people's mourning to his last resting-place at Charlottenburg down the snow-covered Unter den Linden, the inscription on the black-draped Brandenburg Gate, "Vale, Senex Imperator," worthily expressed the feelings of his Prussian subjects and of Germany.

The scene which the writer witnessed on the memorable day of his funeral was in a

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

sense emblematic of the feelings and the condition of the German nation. There was a great display of military power; and no German entertained a doubt of the military supremacy of his country. There was a splendid gathering of the Royal and other representatives of Germany's allies and friends, and, except for France, Germany had no declared enemy in the world. But there was over all the sadness of farewell, not only to a pre-eminent European figure, but to a great epoch of national history, and the future seemed as dismal and uncertain as was the wintry twilight of that March day which counterfeited December.

The heir to the Prussian throne and to the Imperial dignity had returned through a snowstorm from San Remo, where, in a warmer climate, he had sought relief from the attacks of the mortal disease by which he was stricken. He was physically unable to attend his father's funeral, and only

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

witnessed it from the windows of the suburban palace of Charlottenburg, as it passed through the palace gardens to the mausoleum. A bitter controversy had arisen as to the nature of the Emperor Frederick's disease, and it was exacerbated by a professional quarrel between the English and the German doctors who attended him. Bismarck and the initiated knew that he was suffering from cancer in the throat, and that his life could not be prolonged beyond a few weeks or months. The medical question, however, began to assume a political aspect, which was none the less disconcerting because it was fictitious. It was questioned, to begin with, whether an invalid Hohenzollern could constitutionally assume the Prussian and Imperial Crowns, since for one thing he would be unable effectively to exercise his functions as Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Moreover, the Emperor Frederick was suspected of

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Liberalist tendencies in domestic policy, and of Anglophil and anti-Russian leanings in foreign affairs. The strong personality of his consort, the Empress Frederick, our Princess Royal, had encouraged the suspicion that he might prove to be in English leading-strings. A phase, and as Prince Bülow once admitted to the writer, a far from unimportant phase, of the estrangement between Germany and England had been opened.

The position of Germany in Europe was doubtless brilliant. By the alliance with Austria-Hungary, followed by the German and Austro-Hungarian alliance with Italy, she had rendered herself, in the practically universal opinion, secure against a war of *revanche* from the French side. By working upon the dynastic and autocratic sympathies of Russia and, as afterwards became known, by means of a secret treaty of re-insurance

Germany's  
position in  
1888.

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

with that Power, Bismarck had, he believed, obviated the possibility of any practical *rapprochement* between Russia and France with the object of challenging the German hegemony in Europe. The great Chancellor always, it is true, suffered from the "nightmare" of hostile coalitions. But by an active policy of "cold-water douches," official or semi-official warnings and remonstrances, addressed now to the Eastern, now to the Western neighbour of Germany, he constantly checked the very beginnings of the evils which he dreaded.

With England he had an easier task. He acknowledged, as everyone acknowledged, her maritime supremacy, but he despised, as most Continentals despised, her military power, and he did not look forward to any rivalry between Germany and England on the seas or beyond them. He knew Englishmen to be obsessed with the anxiety which alleged Russian designs upon India inspired.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

England's "money" was still "upon the wrong horse," as Lord Salisbury subsequently confessed, in her relations with Turkey and her apprehensions of continued Russian ambitions with regard to the Dardanelles. The Berlin Press organization skilfully fostered these British anxieties; and the attitude and actions of Russia, which were secretly encouraged from Berlin, would not in any case have helped to allay them.

Bismarck pursued a similar policy with regard to England's relations with France.

**Bismarck's  
foreign  
policy.** Here, too, there was often just cause for apprehensions, and, by encouraging France in her policy of Mediterranean expansion, and particularly in the acquisition of Tunis, Bismarck was able to see his wishes realized in an attitude of mutual suspicion and military watchfulness on the part of the two Western Powers.

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

As for Germany herself, the Chancellor was, no doubt, sincere in his description of her as "satiated" by the achievements and conquests of 1864, 1866, and 1870-71. It was almost past belief that, even after fifty years of strenuous and methodical preparation, the dream of German unity should have been realized by the result of three successful campaigns within a period of seven years, and that Schleswig-Holstein, with the harbour of Kiel and the command of the Elbe, should have been won by Prussia, and Alsace-Lorraine incorporated in the new Empire.

The temper of the nation, indeed, varied according to the class and antecedents of individuals and classes. Among the "satiated" of that period were the Prussian squires, the class from which the officers of the Prussian Army and the higher bureaucracy had been recruited. They had been suspicious of the union of the German states

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

under a Prussian Emperor. They had feared, like William I. himself, that a “German Emperor,” notwithstanding the carefully managed form of his recognition at Versailles by the German Sovereigns, would prove to have been “anointed with a drop of democratic oil.” They were too familiar with the daily exigencies of Prussia’s position in the centre of Europe not to apprehend some slackening of Prussian discipline and vigilance in the midst of sentimental rejoicings over the union of the German people. Schleswig-Holstein, yes! Alsace-Lorraine, certainly! although it might have been better in the opinion of some that the Reichsland, the conquered French territory, should have frankly been annexed by Prussia, and not by the new Empire. But a Reichstag elected by direct and universal suffrage was a stumbling-block to the Prussian Junkers; and it was mainly the evidence

**The  
Prussian  
Junkers and  
the new  
Empire.**



## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

that the new Constitution had been framed like a cuirass to fit the form of the greatest Prussian of all—Bismarck—that reassured them and made them believe that Prussia would continue to keep the reins of Germany in her hand.

The German idealists, the believers in a united and progressive Germany, were also on the whole satisfied. Their dreams of German unity were substantially realized, although they might have preferred that the representatives of the people had played a more prominent part in the proceedings at Versailles than was represented by the presence of President von Simson and the Vice-Presidents of the Imperial Parliament, smuggled, as it were, to the palace in a closed landau. Some of them trusted Bismarck after he had tamed them in the Prussian Constitutional conflict of the sixties; others remained uneasy or hostile. But, no more

German  
Liberalism  
after 1870.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

than the Prussian squires, did any of the German Liberals at that epoch dream that Germany's future tasks might lie outside of the lines of national defence and European influence which Bismarck had laid down. If anyone had proclaimed "Our future is on the water," or, "The trident ought to be in our fist," or, "Nothing can now be done in the world without Germany and the German Emperor," they would have set him down as insane.

The business classes were of much the same mind. They shrugged their shoulders, indeed, at the way in which the Prussian governing class and the small German *noblesse* in general looked askance upon commerce and industry. But they had found that the union of Germany and the removal of internal customs barriers had given a tremendous impetus to trade, and they only asked to be let alone, if they could not be actively encouraged.

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

The views of the last-named classes with regard to transmarine policy were, at the time of the death of William I., eminently cautious and conservative. Germany had already acquired in 1884 one or two African colonies—German South-West Africa at that time regarded universally as a sandy desert with no prospect of development; the Cameroons, mostly unexplored, and of a value that was entirely problematic; Togoland, about whose prospects only a few specially interested traders had any information. Her Australasian annexations excited little interest. So far as foreign trade was concerned, the business world was convinced that the best customer of Germany would always be the British Empire, which seemed to be wedded to Free Trade, and it was gladly recognized that the British Empire made no distinction in the matter of privileges and opportunities between German traders and her own.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

A British merchant was as welcome at Hamburg or Bremen as a German one, and English was the second language of the bankers, merchants, and shipowners of these free and ancient Hanseatic cities. The English as individuals were popular throughout Germany. The exaltation of spirit created by the Prussian and German successes in the field had, no doubt, produced in various quarters a certain questioning as to the charter by which the British Empire was held. It was seen that, great as was the admiration which German discipline and German successes had elicited in all countries of the world, the presence of the British flag at so many and such distant points on the globe, the extent of British territory and the volume of British interests and trade, made England appear to other races to be the first Power in the world, while Germans were convinced

**The new  
Germany  
and the  
British  
Empire.**

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

that Germany was the strongest. Englishmen, too, it was noted, while contributing their meed of admiration to German efficiency, continued to be unconcerned about their own position in the world, and appeared to take it as a matter of course that no other country, and least of all Germany, could ever challenge that position. This British self-complacency alternately provoked admiration and a dash of jealousy, and, in the minor controversies which arose between Bismarck and our Governments—in the Angra Pequena incident, which ultimately led to the establishment of Germany in South-West Africa, for example—the desire to stir the British lion out of his excessive equanimity was probably as much as anything the cause of a passing asperity of tone on the German side. There can, however, be no doubt that the misapprehensions and the irritation which were excited around the death-bed of the Emperor

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Frederick did much to lay the foundation of the Anglophobia which was destined to spread in so alarming a fashion throughout Germany in the following decade.

The German movement for the acquisition of colonies seemed, in 1888, to be so restricted and uninfluential as to be almost negligible from an international point of view. The German Colonial Society was the hobby of a few rich men of little public position, of a number of petty officials and active or retired officers, and of a few members of the Parliaments, who were mostly regarded as unpractical enthusiasts or troublesome cranks. Bismarck gave the movement little encouragement. Its leader, Dr. Carl Peters, was in the Chancellor's black books, and when Dr. Peters, by his filibustering Emin Pasha relief expedition in 1889, endeavoured to secure Uganda for German East Africa, Bismarck refused him a passage through German territory

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

and took no exception to the British efforts, which proved unsuccessful, to prevent him from passing through the territory of the then British East African Company.

As to naval rivalry with England, the idea of it had hardly entered into the brain of the most Chauvinistic of Prussians or Germans. In those days—only twenty-six years ago—an Englishman might often have heard a German say: “You are the greatest naval power in the world, and we are the greatest military power. Why don’t we unite and rule the world?” Such was the simple formula in which the problem of world-policy at that date presented itself to the average German mind even among the more intellectual classes. True it is that Prussia, and, through Prussia, Germany, possessed the important naval base of Kiel, and that the foundations of a German Navy had been laid.

Bismarck had even uttered his humorous

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

and unconsciously prophetic saying about the natural astonishment of the sea-going

**The new  
Germany  
and sea-  
power.**

English when they saw "their land-rat" of a German cousin "taking to the water." But up

to a far later date it had hardly entered into the mind of any of the Kaiser's people that Germany should or could by any possibility aim at rivalling England on the sea. As late as 1895, the year of the opening of the Kiel Canal, the writer can well remember standing on the jetty of a private villa at Kiel with some not very intelligent officers of the German Army and some highly intelligent comrades of theirs in the German Navy. One of the less intelligent landmen, looking at the handful of old-fashioned German battleships in the offing, said: "I wonder if by superhuman exertions we could ever manage to approach the English in sea-power." With every sign of sincere conviction the brightest of his



## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

naval comrades promptly replied: "No, never, and we do not even dream of it."

There was always, however, present to the German mind the disproportion between the modest military power of the British Empire and the extent and character of the territories which we held, and an element of bitterness mingled in these reflections. Germany, men said, had had to pour forth her blood like water in order merely to achieve her own unity. Great Britain had become the richest, and territorially the greatest, Empire of the world at the cost of mere "colonial wars," waged mostly against inferior races and at comparatively little cost of blood or treasure. It was sometimes wondered whether these supposed happy and easy circumstances could continue. The problem of Indian defence was known to excite anxiety, and it was universally believed that England was bound to keep on good terms with Germany

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

if only in order to counterpoise the menace of Russia in that quarter. It was not everywhere acknowledged that England's attitude during the war of 1870 had been as benevolent as Germans would have liked it to be. In the course of that struggle Bismarck had on one or two occasions, notably by the sinking of English coal ships in the Seine, shown his rougher side to England. But the memories of the Napoleonic wars and of Waterloo were still fresh, and it was believed that in respect of British friendship there was nothing to be feared; for was not England, quite apart from Anglo-French colonial friction, as decidedly the hereditary enemy of France as Prussia herself? In foreign affairs, in a word, the anxieties of the spring of 1888 in Germany were centred upon the old problems with which Bismarck had been dealing for a generation—the maintenance of German friendships and alliances, the skilful management of Russia,

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

and an attitude of defence and defiance towards France. All would be well if Bismarck remained in office under the successors of William I., and if his policy could be maintained by them when in the course of nature he had to depart.

In home affairs there was less unanimity but also less anxiety. The growth of Social Democracy was ominous, and the votes cast for it at the General Elections were already approaching 2,000,000.

After the attempts of irresponsible assassins upon the life of the aged William I. in the heart of the capital, the opportunity had been seized of placing Prussia in a "minor state of siege" by the Socialist Law. The writer, looking back upon his first visit to Berlin in March, 1888, can well remember that the sense of governmental and military repression was far more novel to him than anything that he has since experienced in

**Bismarck  
and German  
Socialism.**

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Europe—in Moscow, for example, which, it is true, he has not visited in time of revolution. Then, and for years afterwards, it was dangerous in Berlin to be seen speaking to a Socialist deputy, and it was considered offensive to discuss in general company the doctrines of Socialism or the aims of Socialists save by way of unqualified reprobation. Among the officer class the opinions of the Socialists and even of the Radicals were summarily described as “mere poison,” and the private utterance of Socialistic opinions by a soldier in uniform would have entailed, and, doubtless, would still entail, very severe disciplinary measures. The Socialists, it went without saying, were the enemies of the Emperor and the Empire. Bebel and Liebknecht (the elder) had been imprisoned, and, in the opinion of many people, ought to have been shot for protesting against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine.

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

Bismarck himself, it is true, rated the power of the Social Democracy at a lower value. He had studied the movement at close quarters, and had conversed with Lassalle "as if he were a country neighbour." He foresaw the use to which he could put the Social Democracy as a bogey to excite the fears and the patriotism of those whom we should in England call the middle classes. A phalanx of 100 Social Democrats in the Reichstag—there are in all 397 deputies—would not, he said, alarm him. The effect of it would be to draw the other parties more closely together in self-defence and in support of the Government. It was a patriotic union of the parties loyal to the existing order of the State that was his constant aspiration. Parliamentary or party government was to him an abomination. His Prussian soul revolted against the necessity of having constantly to manœuvre in order to obtain a working

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

majority in the Imperial Parliament. In the Prussian Landtag, with the three-class system of election, he was under no such bitter constraint, and had always, since the "conflict" of the early sixties, had a working majority. His great Parliamentary anxiety in the Imperial Parliament—apart from the powerful Catholic Centre—was the Radical rump under the persistent leadership of Eugen Richter. He well knew the sentimental love of liberty which lingered in the descendants of the men of 1848, a few aged survivors of whom still haunted the councils of the Radicals. He himself was no enthusiast for world-policy, but this very fact made it all the more difficult for him to combat the ridicule which speakers like Richter and Bamberger poured in the Reichstag upon the beginnings of German colonial expansion. The National Liberals, indeed, he had "crushed against the wall,"

Political  
Parties.

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

and all the aspirations of their leader, von Bunnigsen, after an Imperial Ministry responsible to Parliament instead of a single Minister, the Chancellor, had long since evaporated. But the evil leaven of Parliamentarism was still active among the Radicals, and the value of the Social Democratic movement in Bismarck's eyes was that it created an anti-Radical Labour party, and thus deprived the Radical *cadres* of the political troops whom they might have hoped to lead to victory.

The domestic situation in Germany in 1888 was complicated by the now exploded delusion that the Emperor Frederick, if he had lived to reign long, would have been the Kaiser of Liberalism in the Radical sense. It is true that both he and the Empress had many personal friends among the Radical leaders. These friends, however, were mostly men who were eminent in other walks than those of mere politics.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Virchow, Mommsen, and Helmholtz were Germans whom it was meet that the future occupants of the throne should recognize and honour. Such men were, no doubt, to some extent the recipients of the political confidences of the Crown Prince's household, and in turn communicated their political ideas to their Royal and Imperial hosts. The then Crown Princess, and, largely through her eyes, the Crown Prince, saw the many deformities of the Bismarckian system. They dreamed of a Germany in which liberty of the subject would be associated with the whole-hearted devotion of the subject to the monarchy and to the national policy of the Sovereign. But it has been clearly demonstrated that the Emperor Frederick's legendary Liberalism. Frederick was as strongly imbued with the ideas of the Kingly and Imperial prerogatives as is his successor, and it has even been brought out by Gustav Freytag



## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

that, in the establishment of the Empire and of German unity, he would not have been satisfied with the cautious diplomatic methods of Bismarck, but would have preferred to force the pace by applying constraint to those German Sovereigns who, like the Bavarian, were long inclined to stand out. There are few Germans of any political persuasion who now believe that he would have manifested greater patience in dealing with a Parliamentary opposition, which, in one form or another, would have been sure to continue, especially if he had retained Bismarck as his Chancellor. And, notwithstanding all the friction which arose between the Empress Victoria and Bismarck over the project for a marriage of the Empress's eldest daughter to Prince Alexander of Battenberg, then ruler of Bulgaria, and over the question of the doctors and other subjects during the "ninety-nine days," the Emperor Frederick, it is now

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

clear, meant to retain Bismarck as his political strength and stay. He might have attempted to mediate between Bismarck and the Radicals; he would never have sacrificed the Chancellor or his system to them.

To the "enemies of the Empire," represented in Bismarck's mind and in his vigorous terminology by the Radicals and Socialists, the great Chancellor was accustomed, when it suited him, to add the Clerical Centre. The fact that it was led by Windhorst, who at the same time was the leader of the Guelphs, the Hanoverian Party of Protest against the annexation of Hanover by Prussia in 1866, made the Centre still more odious to him. It called itself the "Party of Right," the Legitimists, and rallied to its flag in the Reichstag not only the Hanoverian, but also the Polish deputies, and the couple of Danes who were returned by Schleswig-Holstein. By the

## GERMANY AT KAISER'S ACCESSION

Kulturkampf against the Roman Catholic Church in Germany Bismarck had hoped to break the political strength of the Centre, and to make Catholicism what Napoleon I. had made it—a docile instrument of his policy.

The persecution of the Catholics only welded their political organization more firmly together. Windhorst's consummate leadership in the Reichstag and the tough resistance of the Catholic clergy and laity throughout Germany ultimately wore down the Chancellor's spirit, and the repeal of the more offensive and repressive of the May Laws was described with some reason as Bismarck's "pilgrimage to Canossa."

## II

### ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

OVER the destinies of a German Empire, the political condition of which has been roughly outlined in the previous chapter, William II. was called upon to preside on June 15, 1888, on the death of the Emperor Frederick. He was in his thirtieth year, having been born on January 27, 1859. His character had, since the illness of his father, been the subject of much speculation in Germany and abroad. He had not been prominently in the public eye until it became known that he must succeed to the throne of Prussia and to the Imperial dignity far earlier than had been expected in view of the picture of health and strength which

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

his father had presented before he was stricken by disease.

It was known that he had been educated, first, by private tutors under the parental roof, afterwards at the Gymnasium of Cassel, where he mingled freely with school comrades of different social classes, and finally at the University of Bonn, where he had been a member of the aristocratic Students' Club, the Borussen. He had subsequently devoted himself heart and soul to his military duties, and was far better known among the officers of the crack regiments in which he had held commissions than by any of his civilian associates. He had, nevertheless, served a kind of apprenticeship in the different Government offices, and had for a time been under the immediate eye of Bismarck at the Imperial Chancellery and at the Foreign Office. Bismarck had been reticent as to Prince William's characteristics, and his one authentic

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

utterance at that period was to the effect that when Prince William came to the throne he would go his own way and be "his own Chancellor." The young Prince it was believed and afterwards known, admired his grandfather rather than his father, preferred the army to politics, and for the rest was ultra-orthodox and conservative in his political as well as in his religious opinions. His outward aspect was martial, and he looked a handsome type of a Prussian officer, in spite of his shrivelled left arm, due to an accident at birth. This deformity, which is sometimes said to have influenced his character and to have rendered him excessively self-conscious and self-assertive, is so well hidden by uniform that the young Emperor had no reason to be unduly conscious of the defect. He had vigorously developed his sword-arm by broadsword exercise since the beginning of his student

**Influences  
and  
tendencies.**

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

days at Bonn, and the grip of his big right hand, on which he wears several rings, often bruises the hands of those to whom he extends it in greeting. He could ride, swim, and shoot with the best of his contemporaries, but, owing to his bodily defect, he never could learn to dance. In the selection of his horses softness of mouth was, and is, always a consideration. They are very carefully trained, and he manages them by the slightest movement of the disabled left arm and hand, as well as, like an ordinary rider, by leg pressure.

When the young Prince went to Bonn at the age of eighteen he had a grave, boyish countenance, with big, thoughtful blue eyes. His hair was worn thick and smoothly brushed. Altogether his aspect recalled the "nation of thinkers and poets" rather than that of warriors and ruthless diplomatists. A great change soon took place in his appearance and in his character. He as-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

sociated with the officers of the Bonn Hussars, a crack cavalry regiment, which had taken the city of Amiens by a daring *coup de main* in 1870, and he speedily became imbued with the spirit of a German cavalry mess. It is in Hussar uniform that he is oftenest seen to this day, and he retains something "Hussar-like" in his whole outlook on life. A good many of his Ministers—Prince Bülow and Herr von Podbielski among them—have been Hussars in their military capacity; and the leader of the Radical Opposition, Herr Eugen Richter, once denounced in the Reichstag the method of government by "Hussar-politicians." A *Hussaren-streich* means a sudden surprise stroke at the enemy, such as Ziethen loved to carry out in the Frederician wars, and there is plenty of evidence that William II. has transferred that method to politics and diplomacy.

Among the Bonn Hussars and in the



## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

regiments with which he was afterwards associated, Prince William learned to take the soldier's view of political affairs. Among professional soldiers in Germany, and doubtless in some other countries, there is a widespread inclination to regard "politics" and "knavish tricks" as synonymous. It would hardly be believed how extraordinary is the influence of this view upon the German officer's conception of politics and diplomacy. He considers that it is the prime business of the diplomatist to hoodwink and cheat his adversary, and that a diplomatic lie is as fair as a military ambush. Politics, in his opinion, are dirty work, and are only regarded as preparatory or complementary to the cleaner work of the sword. This military view fits into the accepted Prussian theory that war is merely an armed episode of foreign policy, and that diplomacy is merely a pacific, but none the

**German  
militarism  
and politics.**

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

less ruthless, campaign in the national interest.

During the illness of the Emperor Frederick, and more especially during the ninety-nine days of his reign (March 9th to June 15th), it became apparent that Prince William, afterwards the Crown Prince, was throwing all his influence into the scale against the hopes which the party of Parliamentarism had based upon the supposed sympathies of his father. He took a stern and uncompromising view of the political and military necessities of Germany, and was preparing to devote himself as Emperor to the task of meeting them. Public opinion in Germany and elsewhere credited him with a good deal of harshness in his attitude towards his parents at this trying period. It was a time of stress and strain for him, and he was gathering around him men afterwards described as "Kaiser's men," who doubtless expressed themselves

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

even more recklessly than their future Emperor. It was among them that the idea of a Regency had been mooted, but there is no evidence that this expedient had been contemplated either by the Crown Prince William or by Bismarck, except in the event of an absolute necessity for it. The Emperor Frederick continued to discharge his functions as King of Prussia and German Emperor up to the day before he died.

What was popularly known or reported regarding William II. did not produce a feeling of general confidence in the minds of the majority of the German people at the moment of his accession. The masses, though military by training, were not martial by nature, and they had fears of being involved in a European war which would be due not to necessity, but to the impetuous nature of the new ruler. The attitude of watchful criticism which was then adop-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

ted by German public opinion towards him has seldom or never been relaxed throughout his reign. It was felt among the more reasonable of the governing classes in Prussia that the public required to be reassured at once regarding the character and aims of the young Emperor, and publications like a sketch by Count Douglas, who had enjoyed his personal acquaintance, were designed to calm the mind of the nation on this score. The new Emperor himself soon began to reveal his personality by a series of proclamations, speeches, and actions. He was lavish in his assurances of devotion to Prince Bismarck, and a quarrel between the Sovereign and the veteran statesman, now in his seventy-fourth year, was not regarded as among the probabilities of the situation. The developments by which that quarrel was brought about originated doubtless in the incompatibility of two

**William II.  
and Bismarck.**

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

temperaments, each of which was set upon domination. But the history of the events which led to Bismarck's dismissal in March, 1890, within two years of the Emperor's accession, revealed a wide divergence between the political conceptions and methods of the Emperor and his Chancellor. It is conjectured on good psychological grounds that the first rift in the lute was caused by the comments which Bismarck published in an outburst of fierce indignation when the Liberalist Professor Geffcken began to reproduce in magazine articles the diary of the Emperor Frederick. Whatever may have been the Emperor William's own opinion of his father's political wisdom and competence—and this is one of the few subjects upon which he has observed some reticence—it is believed by those who know him best that he resented the tone of criticism in which a servant of the Crown, even if he were a Bismarck, had ventured to indulge.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

There was plenty of evidence, however, that the Emperor at first regarded it as a patriotic duty to maintain close relations of confidence with the old Chancellor, and Bismarck himself, until the final crisis, refrained from open criticism of his young master.

That crisis arose in consequence of the independent line of policy which began to be pursued by William II. both in home and in foreign affairs. It soon became manifest that, encouraged by the plaudits of honest or calculating flatterers in his *entourage*, the Emperor was becoming inspired by a dominating belief, not only in his "divine" credentials and mission, but in his personal qualifications to influence and persuade political leaders at home and Sovereigns and Governments abroad. His attitude towards England at this time, and often afterwards, was based upon the conception that family relationships and the memories

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

of alliance and friendship between the Governments and peoples could be successfully utilized to bend British policy in accordance with his own. His visits to England and the honours which he received and bestowed—the first of them was his appointment by Queen Victoria, in 1889, as an Admiral of the Fleet—gave rise to many misunderstandings in Germany, where these proceedings could with difficulty be reconciled with the general trend of German foreign policy, or with the overtures which were simultaneously being made to other Powers. The Emperor could within a few months praise the “volunteer army” of Great Britain, recalling at the same time the comradeship of arms at Malplaquet and at Waterloo, and drink to the health of the defenders of Sebastopol and of Plevna. These were natural compliments, no doubt, in both cases, but they were compliments of a kind which were liable to be misinterpreted.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

The Emperor's belief in his own personal influence and initiative was strengthened by the generous and cordial receptions which he met with on the occasions of his numerous visits to foreign Courts and capitals. It was reasonable that he should desire to gratify his eager curiosity by travel and by intercourse with foreign Sovereigns and statesmen, and he was, and is, fond of pomp and ceremony. But he sometimes seemed to forget the limitations which are attached to the highest position in a State, and the undesirability of his travelling and expressing himself with the freedom which might not be out of place in a less responsible personage. His own conscience, as he once stated in a speech to the municipal councilors of Berlin, warranted him in believing that his foreign visits were paid in the interest of peace and of his own country. As Bismarck subsequently observed with a spice of sarcasm, the Emperor was playing



## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

the part of "political bagman" (*politischer Commis Voyageur*) for Germany. The wary old Chancellor at the same time perceived that dangers, both to the Imperial traveller's character and to the interests of Germany, were involved in these frequent journeys and speeches. There were two of the journeys in particular to which he took exception while he was still in office. The one was the visit which the Emperor paid to the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, in November, 1899. The other was the second visit which, upon his own proposal, he arranged to pay to the Tsar Alexander III. after that monarch's return visit to Berlin in October of the same year. In Bismarck's opinion the visit to the Sultan was calculated to deflect and extend the scope of German foreign policy, and the sequel showed that the Chancellor was right. The spontaneous second visit to Alexander

The  
"political  
bagman."

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

III., one of the most undemonstrative of Sovereigns, was bound, in Bismarck's opinion, to give rise to the suspicion that Germany was courting Russia. The courting of Russia. Russia and humiliating herself at the same time. All these excessive demonstrations of cordiality were incompatible with the delicate balance of foreign policy which Bismarck thought it his duty to maintain. It was as if an employer who was a novice should oust a skilled workman and begin to manipulate complicated machinery, the management of which required the highest technical knowledge and experience. Bismarck lost no time in the case of the second visit to Russia in informing William II. of his adverse views, and thereby he undoubtedly gave offence. The Chancellor's objections to the visit to Constantinople were more lightly brushed aside and the Emperor, in his youthful ardour, conceived that he would reassure the

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

old statesman by addressing to him from the Mediterranean a cordial telegram expressive of the high emotions which had been excited in the Imperial mind by the sights and experiences of the voyage. Bismarck shook his head over these manifestations of inexperienced self-confidence and ardour. The mistakes of an ordinary young man may be at once ludicrous and forgivable; but this young man was the responsible head of the German Empire, and the master of a very formidable nation in arms. He was playing with thunderbolts.

In home affairs the Emperor's action speedily led to an equal divergence of views. Party divisions and party feeling in Germany are none the less acute that political parties there can seldom exercise any effective Parliamentary power against the Government. In the young Emperor's eyes party conflicts were mostly incomprehensible and always lamentable. They had

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

no more justification in time of peace, he considered, than in time of war, but he overestimated his own personal and official influence when he thought that vigorous exhortation from his lips was capable of putting an end to them. Social Democracy above all was for him nothing but a monstrous aberration and an exhibition of wilful or pitiable blindness to the greatness and glory of the Fatherland, and to the honour and duty of serving it with unqualified devotion. He had only to point this out and to display his own paternal solicitude for the lot of the working classes, and the cancer of Socialism would, he hoped, be eradicated. His words were: "Leave Social Democracy to me: I will deal with it." He proceeded to deal with it by alternate attempts to intimidate and cajole the Socialists. At one moment they were "fellows without a country" (*vaterlandslose Gesellen*), the next

Treatment  
of political  
parties.

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

they were to put their trust in him and to be assured that he would redress any legitimate grievances.

In order to impress Germany and Europe with his good intentions he personally took up the "Labour Question" as a European problem. In February, 1890, he issued his famous Labour Edicts to the Imperial Chancellor, summoning, first, the Prussian State Council, a body composed of expert representatives of the different economic interests of the country, and, secondly, an International Conference of the representatives of various countries, including England and France, for the purpose of considering questions of factory and workshop legislation as conditioned by international competition.

As an idea the proposal was unexceptionable, and evoked the admiration of philanthropists throughout the world. But, as Bismarck well knew, it is as easy to enunci-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

ate great ideas as it is difficult to give practical effect to them. The Chancellor freely expressed his apprehensions in private audiences, and presently, when other causes of conflict between him and his Imperial Master had become acute, he did not hesitate to mobilize his army of writers in the Press against the Emperor's scheme. It was this Press conflict which first revealed to a wider public the fact, which had for some time been known to the initiated, that the cleavage between William II. and the first Chancellor was becoming fatal to continued co-operation.

With the Bismarck crisis began the first of those great domestic convulsions and conflicts which have been so frequent during the reign of William II. and have had the profoundest effect upon his character and upon the destinies of his country and of Europe. The Bismarck conflict and those which arose out of it or succeeded it set as

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

it were the nerves both of the Emperor and of the German people on edge, and neither the one nor the other has ever since recovered a normal composure. The words "creeping crisis" (*die schleichende Krise*) so constantly heard in Germany from March, 1890, till this day express accurately enough the state of the country's public life, and, unhappily, of its foreign relations.

At first the dismissal of Bismarck was hailed with a sigh of relief in many quarters, both outside and within Germany. It was thought that no one would again be able to suppress freedom at home and to menace national independence abroad as Bismarck had done. Many people still consider that the dismissal of the first Chancellor was the greatest and best action of the Emperor's reign, and that he is to be congratulated upon the wisdom, and, above all, upon the courage which he displayed in that crisis. Even in the ranks of Prussian squiredom

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

there were many who at first welcomed the decision of William II. The old Chancellor was past his work. "No longer did anything succeed" with him. He spent most of the year at his country seats, Friedrichsruh and Varzin, and the consequence was that affairs in Berlin became congested, so that both legislation and administration were delayed and muddled. Even in foreign affairs the old skill and cunning failed to sway the situation. The enemies of Germany, it was urged, were beginning to raise their heads. France and Russia were drawing closer to one another, and the position of Germany in the world was no longer on a level with that which she had occupied during the lifetime of the Emperor William I. No one, indeed, suggested or could imagine how Bismarck was to be replaced in foreign affairs; but, on the one side, it was to be hoped that a policy of greater courtesy and



## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

consideration towards Germany's neighbours would ease the pressure, and, on the other, that the young Emperor would act up to his more martial utterances, and impress Europe and the world by the rattle of his sabre.

The more cogent of the immediate causes of the rupture between the Emperor and Bismarck were not generally known at the time of his dismissal. But even if they had been known they would hardly have affected the balance of the popular verdict. That Bismarck was being ousted from the exclusive control of foreign, and especially of home, policy would not have presented itself as an enormity either to those who deplored his advancing age and growing infirmities of health and of temper, or to those who aspired after a partition of constitutional influence and responsibility among the Prussian Ministers and the Imperial Secretaries of State. Neither

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

absolute monarchists nor Liberal idealists could sympathize with the practical concentration of power in the hands of one man, and that man neither the Sovereign nor the mandatory of the people. The special ground of quarrel which Bismarck chose—the Emperor's demand for the repeal of the Cabinet order that made Royal audiences for other Cabinet Ministers dependent upon the Prussian Minister-President's—*i. e.*, Bismarck's—knowledge and approval—was such that it would not at once have been appreciated by the popular or even the Parliamentary mind. And, indeed, Bismarck did not reveal this ground to wider circles of the public until a later date when he had recovered in "exile" much of his lost popularity.

The difficulties which began to beset the path of the Emperor soon after Bismarck's departure were not solely, as has been alleged, due to the intrigues of the ex-Chan-

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

cellor and of the so-called Bismarckian *fronde*, but also to deeper and more lasting causes.

The successor to Bismarck, whom William II. selected, was General von Caprivi, a chivalrous soldier of remarkable talent and wide general culture, a man with an open mind in current political questions, but devoted with unquestioning obedience to the service of the Crown. Able as was the instrument which the Emperor chose, it was evident that under the Caprivi régime William II. was to be in an important sense his own Chancellor. Liberals of all shades—with the exception of a Bismarckian section of the National Liberals,—the Clericals, mindful of the Kulturkampf, and the Social Democrats, had welcomed Bismarck's fall. The Emperor for a brief space found himself acclaimed by German Liberalism and Clericalism. He appeared to be susceptible to the influence of the new

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

situation, and, although he declared that he continued to steer "the same course" as before, it was evident that the sails of the ship were being trimmed to catch the favouring Liberal and the Clerical breezes.

Caprivi as Chancellor. In home affairs Caprivi's administration was notable for the reduction of the import duties on foreign grain and for an Army Bill passed with the help of Liberal and Clerical votes. Only as recently as two months before Bismarck's fall the Emperor had, contrary to the spirit of the Constitution, made a personal appeal at the General Elections in favour of the old Bismarckian coalition (*Cartell*) of the Conservatives and National Liberals.

The German Electorate had given an unfavourable response at the polls, and Parliamentary exigencies, as well as the state of popular feeling, rendered a movement towards the Left imperative.

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

William II. clearly thought at this period that he could unite Germany by placing himself at the head of the masses. Favours and compliments began to be showered upon the Catholics, especially the higher clergy. Even their allies, the Poles, were conscious of milder treatment. The Radicals were no longer branded as "enemies of the Empire," and some of their newspaper organs began to wear the airs of "semi-officialism." The Social Democrats themselves were given a chance of rallying to the support of a more liberal régime. The Socialist law with its restrictions had been dropped; the leaders were free to move about in the Empire, to hold party conferences, and to organize their forces. At a meeting of the Council of State (see p. 47), the Emperor had conversed for a long time with a Socialist locksmith and had genially observed: "I cannot, of course, put Bebel [the Socialist leader]

The  
Emperor  
attempts to  
use the  
masses.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

on the throne!" About this time Bebel himself confessed to the present writer, for what it was worth, his opinion that the Emperor, owing perhaps to his English studies and his English ancestry, was better fitted to understand the aspirations of the working classes than any of his German contemporaries among the governing classes. So far as the Socialists were concerned, this phase of Imperial lenity did not last long. Strikes and other labour manifestations soon gave occasion for manifestations of the Emperor's abhorrence of Socialist methods. He reminded the Social Democratic millions that the sabre cuts and the bullet kills, and he told his soldiers that, in case of need, they must not hesitate to shoot down their own fathers and brothers.

The great test of patriotism in Germany was, and is, support of the national defences and readiness to vote the financial and military proposals of the Government for

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

strengthening them. Liberalism, even Radicalism, so long as it was monarchic in sentiment, would be tolerated if it rallied to the cause of the flag. Under the semi-Liberalist administration of Caprivi this test was applied to the Radicals by the Army Bill of 1893, which, while affecting a great increase in the peace strength, made a concession to popular feeling by reducing the period of service to two years. There was a General Election over the Bill, but it was finally carried owing to a split in the Radical party, from which that party has never recovered.

In dealing with the methods and aims of William II., this episode in the history of German Radicalism is of real significance. It was noted with some amusement that the Emperor was lavish in his attentions to those Radicals who supported the Government on the Army Bill. They were, for example, invited to spend a summer

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

evening with him and the Empress on an island in the river Havel, a pleasure-ground of the Royal Family, near Potsdam, where appropriate entertainment was provided for them, including a switchback railway. Such Imperial condescension towards people of the middle class and former "enemies of the Empire," as Bismarck had called them, was wholly unprecedented in Prussia; it was an innovation that was characteristic of William II.'s eagerness and of his willingness to be all things to all men, if by any means he might gain some.

Among the Radicals themselves there was a new spirit abroad. Social influences had begun to play their part and a wealthy manufacturer, banker, or tradesman, whose sons were officers of the Reserve or his daughters married to officers of the Active Army, could not permanently resist the kind of persuasion which was applied to him by members of his own household. Foreign,



## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

and especially English, partisans of Germany made a fundamental mistake when they assumed that the pacific or Anglophile tendencies of the German commercial world, which the Radicals largely represented, would prove permanently recalcitrant in the event of political mobilization in support of an aggressive foreign policy.

The gathering storm of opposition to all this policy of general appeasement, contrasted with the exclusive old Conservative patriotism, was beginning to <sup>Prussian</sup> affect very closely the Emperor <sup>Junkerdom.</sup> and his position. The merging of Prussian interests and influences in those of the Empire was not at all to the taste of the Prussian squires east of the Elbe. Of that class Prince Hohenlohe subsequently wrote in his diary that their point of view remained essentially Prussian, and that they "did not care a fig for the Empire" (*Sie pfeifen auf das Reich*). The Emperor thought that he

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

knew the Junkers and that he could bend their will to acquiescence in his larger policy. Did he not shoot hares and pledge toasts with them? Had he not been their hope against Social Democracy on the one hand and Bismarckian Parliamentary tactics on the other? It is now clear that he miscalculated the nature of their devotion to his person. The *noblesse* and *petite noblesse* of Prussia have always regarded the Hohenzollern dynasty as an instrument. "And the King is absolute when he does our will" (*Und der König absolut, wenn er unseren Willen thut*). Their ancestors in the days of the early Hohenzollern Margraves of Brandenburg had described the dynasty imported from South Germany as "The Nuremberg toy." On the palace door of one of the Margraves they had chalked up the words: "Joachim, Joachim, take care; if we catch you, we'll hang you!"

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

The reduction in the import duties on grain in the commercial treaties, for carrying which General von Caprivi had received the dignity of Count at the Emperor's hands, affected their economic interests and they were soon, politically speaking, up in arms. The Agrarian League (*Bund der Landwirte*) was formed, and a policy of declared opposition inaugurated. The meetings of the League brought thousands of landed proprietors, small and great, to the Circus Busch in Berlin. Wild words were uttered, and some of the more turbulent spirits declared that they might yet take a leaf out of the book of the Social Democrats.

William II. was genuinely shocked. He could not understand opposition directed from such a quarter against his person and policy, which have always been identified with one another.

In a speech delivered at Königsberg in

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

the autumn of 1894, the Emperor exclaimed: "Yes, I have even had to see with profound anxiety and pain that in circles of the nobility which are very near to me my intentions have been misunderstood and in part combated. Yes, even the word 'opposition' has reached my ears. Gentlemen, opposition by Prussian noblemen to their King is a monstrosity; opposition is only justified when it knows that the King is at its head, as the history of our House teaches.

. . . . .

As the ivy twines round the sturdy trunk of the oak, adorns the tree with its foliage, and protects it when storms rage through its crest (*Krone*), so does the Prussian nobility cling to my House.

. . . . .

Forward, then, with God's help, and

## ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

shame upon him who leaves his King in the lurch!"

The nobility and the squires of Prussia took care that the Imperial eloquence should not blunt the keenness of their agitation. Under the cautious leadership of members of the great Prussian family of the Eulenburgs, they managed to take the Emperor's position from the weakest side. A deputation of landowners got itself received at Potsdam and presented a humble address appealing on behalf of its interests to the King of Prussia's benevolent feelings as "father of his country" (*Landesvater*). The chord which they thus touched speedily responded. A Press intrigue, skilfully manœuvred by the Eulenburgs, brought about the fall of Count Caprivi in about six weeks after the Königsberg speech. He had served his Sovereign faithfully and well and throughout Germany and the world there were

Ingratitude  
to Caprivi

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

many, including monarchs among the Emperor's nearest kin, who considered that the second Chancellor had been treated with scant justice and with singular ingratitude.

### III

#### WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

THE bearing of the internal state of Germany upon German foreign policy soon became manifest under William II. It was not merely that Bismarck, in his "exile" at Friedrichsruh, near Hamburg, began to assail the conduct of the Foreign Office under his successor. The Opposition in general, well aware of the sensitiveness of the German people to dangers from abroad, were incessant in their attacks upon the alleged weakness of Count Caprivi's management of foreign affairs. A treaty had been concluded with Great Britain shortly after Bismarck's departure by which, in exchange for territory in East Africa, Eng-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

land had ceded to Germany the island of Heligoland, since converted into a very powerful naval fortress guarding the mouth of the Elbe. The treaty, the essential terms of which had really been arranged by Bismarck and his son, Count Herbert, before they left office, was vigorously denounced as a bad bargain for Germany, and the strategical value of Heligoland, now manifest to the whole world, was rated at *nil*. It should be noted in passing that at this early date the Emperor's own conception of the importance of the island was revealed in a speech to representatives of the Navy at the ceremony of taking possession of the new acquisition. The island was to be "a bulwark on the sea . . . a base for my Navy, and a shelter and protection for German waters against any enemy who may think of appearing upon them." It had been won "without fighting or bloodshed," and,



## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

as he added, "without the shedding of one tear." The tone of the Imperial speeches on that occasion showed that the spirit of acquisitiveness was strongly implanted in the Emperor's character and that William II. was minded to be a ruler who would increase the Empire (*ein Mehrer des Reichs*) with or without the accompaniments of "blood" and "tears," as the case might be.

It was the question of German relations with Russia, however, which was exploited to the utmost in the campaign of the Opposition against the "new course." The traditional Bismarckian policy in dealings with Russia was based upon the principle of *do ut des* and Bismarck was fond of reminding the eastern neighbour that at the Berlin Congress of 1878 he had really acted as her extra-plenipotentiary in the settlement of the Eastern Question after the Russo-Turkish War. It was a theory of Bismarck and the Bismarckians that Russia must both be

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

humoured and held at bay. For the moment it was the humouring policy that the Opposition in Germany favoured, and that policy was recommended by all the curious sentimental legends based upon dynastic ties which are so freely employed when they suit the purposes of the governing caste in Prussia.

The old Emperor William, in his last hours, when his eyesight was dimmed by the shades of approaching death, had addressed his grandson, the reigning Emperor, and, mistaking him for Bismarck, had said: "Manage Russia" (or, "Keep on terms with Russia"); "you have done that well." It was now seen that under Alexander III., whom neither Bismarck nor William II. seemed to be able to "manage," Russia was drifting away from Germany and drawing closer to France.

The secret Treaty of Re-insurance concluded between Germany and Russia in

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

1887, which was Bismarck's salvage of the Three Kaiser League, had been allowed to expire without renewal shortly after his resignation in 1890. It has been alleged that William II. and Count Caprivi were not, as Bismarck continued to insinuate, responsible for the lapse of the treaty, and that Alexander III. had long before 1890 become too certain of the Austrian tendencies of German policy in the Balkans to enter into a renewed agreement with Germany. But the German explanation, which Russia has never publicly contradicted, was that William II. and Caprivi considered the co-existence of the Austrian Alliance and the Secret Treaty with Russia to be an arrangement that was "too complicated," or, in other words, too dishonest. The treaty provided that in one case of the two Powers—Russia or Germany—should be attacked by a third

Overthrow  
of Bis-  
marck's  
Russian  
policy.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Power, the other should remain benevolently neutral.

Alexander III. is said to have resisted all Bismarck's endeavours to extend the treaty with the object of isolating France in the event of her being attacked by *both* Germany and Austria-Hungary. The attitude of Bismarck as a critic after his dismissal must, however, be distinguished from his conduct when he was a responsible statesman in office. The Press organs of the "exiled" ex-Chancellor went so far as to represent him as by no means an advocate of the Austrian Alliance without reservations. Germany's prime interests were her own, not Austria-Hungary's, and Bismarck could conceive circumstances, it was intimated, in which the German Empire might be called upon to dissociate herself from her Austrian ally in favour of a more advantageous coalition.

The fact was that Germany, on the initia-

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

tive of William II., had adopted a new attitude towards the Eastern Question. The sincerity of Bismarck's declarations that the whole Eastern Question was not worth the bones of a Pomeranian Grenadier may be doubted. The same doubt applies to a statement which he once made to an eminent British Ambassador in Constantinople, Sir William White, to the effect that, if Russia took Constantinople, Germany would "do nothing."

Bismarck could feel easy in his mind regarding the Near Eastern Question so long as Austria-Hungary and Great Britain were united in the policy of maintaining the *status quo*. Under the auspices of William II., however, Germany had embarked on a positive policy of her own in the Near East. It is as yet impossible to say how far a spirit of romantic adventure and how far the calculations of political and commercial interests entered into the

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

original causes which determined William II. to become the close friend and adviser of the Sultan of Turkey, and to look for a sphere of world-policy in the Turkish Empire, and particularly in the promotion of the Baghdad Railway.

The romantic element in the Emperor's nature, alien though it was to the character of his grandfather, whom he professed to set up as his model, had been strikingly exhibited in his grand-uncle, Frederick William IV. The visits of William II. to Constantinople, to Jerusalem, and to Damascus, were conceived in the spirit of those aspirations of Frederick William IV., which had found expression in the abortive establishment of the Anglo-German Bishopric of Jerusalem. The world has not yet forgotten the theatrical entry of William II. into the holy city in the guise of a crusader, his speeches there and at Damascus, and his acceptance of the

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

Dormition of the Holy Virgin from the Sultan as a present to a German branch of a religious order.

Unlike Frederick William IV., however, the Emperor had behind him the more practical modern forces of German industry and German finance. He left the details of German economic aggression to these factors, while he himself supplied or created the sentimental impulses and the external ornamentations of the national activity. To Bismarck and the Prussians of Bismarck's day all these theatrical proceedings would have been anathema. They were accepted by many sensible Germans, who were the Emperor's contemporaries, as methods of stirring the popular mind at home and abroad, while the sensational and cinematographic Press of all countries, including England, welcomed them as "good copy." It must have required something like spiritual and intellectual

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

contortions on the part of so avowedly Christian a monarch as William II. to identify himself as closely as he did with a ruler of the type of Abdul Hamid. The feat was accomplished. A kind of political and personal brotherhood was sworn between the two monarchs, and lasted through the later horrors of the Sultan's reign until he was deposed by the Revolution. As in other instances, the German Imperial friendship did not bring any lasting benefit to its object, but for the time being it doubtless subserved the ends of the personal policy of William II. on behalf of his dynasty and his country.

The political objects of German policy in the Near East, and more especially in Asia Minor, are characteristic of the epoch of William II. Much has been said and written about the value of Asia Minor as a field for German colonization and expansion. At the time of the inception of the



## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

Baghdad Railway enterprise, and long afterwards, these theories were disavowed—by practical Germans, at any rate. The late Herr Georg von Siemens, of the Deutsche Bank, the prime financial mover in the Baghdad enterprise, once explained to the writer that the railway would never be profitable as a means of exploiting Asia Minor. Its success would depend upon the amount of traffic which it could attract from India and the Farther East. From the political point of view, the value of the enterprise seemed to be that, at the cost of great risks, it gave Germany a footing in one of the greatest centres of world-politics. Opinion in Great Britain and elsewhere had begun to weary of German diplomatic interventions and of German attempts at hegemony in international questions which concerned her either very indirectly or not at all. Now, the fate of the young German Empire, if

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

it had confined itself to minding its own business, would have been pitiable in the eyes of William II., and of the school whose aspirations he tried to embody. With a rapidly growing population and a rapid industrial and commercial development, it would, like Great Britain and France, have had to occupy itself with questions of domestic development, and, above all, with constitutional problems. The eyes of Germans would have been turned inwards towards the condition of the people and the question of their political emancipation and education. The Social Democracy, the Radicals and a section of the Liberals and of the Clericals would doubtless have demanded effective popular representation to the Imperial Parliament by means of an increase and a redistribution of seats in accordance with the Constitution of the Empire, which contemplated one deputy for every 100,000 of the population. The

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

aims of William II. were entirely inconsistent with that kind of national development. Prussia, under the auspices of the Hohenzollern dynasty and by means of the Bismarckian policy of blood and iron, had united the geographically contiguous German lands in a territorial, military, economic, and sentimental confederation. The price of this achievement which Prussia exacted at Versailles in 1871, without much enthusiasm for the idea on the part of King William I., was the permanent military supremacy of the King and Government of Prussia and the Imperial dignity for the Prussian Sovereign. In the conception of William II. the Imperial and military predominance of the Hohenzollern dynasty in Germany was the vital point which he must constantly endeavour to emphasize and establish. The rise of ambitions of this character in Brandenburg and Prussia dates, however,

The  
Prussian  
ideal.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

as William II. is well aware, from the Great Elector (1640), whom he constantly sets before the eyes of his people as the initiator of Prussian greatness. The military methods and the conception of monarchy by which the predominance of Prussia, or of what Treitschke calls "Prussia-Germany" (*Preussen-Deutschland*), was promoted were borrowed from the system of Peter the Great of Russia. This fact furnishes a key both to the subservience of the Hohenzollerns to Russia in the infancy of their Germanic power and in all times of Prussian and German Imperial weakness or difficulty. It also explains the constant Prussian study and fear of Russia. The Hohenzollerns have always known that, in the last resort, the possibility of their success depended upon the goodwill of the Tsar or, failing that goodwill, upon the power of Prussia aided by the German States and by the allies of Germany, to give pause to the action of

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

Russia. The "tremendous" Russian idea of Government, supported by millions of bayonets as "the intellectual guide of the nation, the promoter of wealth, the guardian of morality, the mainspring of the ascending movement of man," was developed, as Lord Acton points out in his *Lectures on Modern History* by much abler minds in Berlin; and he significantly adds that it is "the greatest danger that remains to be "encountered by the Anglo-Saxon race."

In the prosecution of this idea the Emperor William and the leading members of his family have known neither rest nor measure. German commerce and industry, as has been pointed out, were not at the beginning of the reign inclined to subordinate their hitherto pacific development to the perilous aims of the Prussian dynasty. The incessant efforts of William II., backed by the aspirations of the ruling caste and by

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

certain vociferous classes of the community, finally succeeded in committing the more solid and laborious elements of the nation to the Hohenzollern policy of adventure. One of the spheres in which German trade and shipping had been making great progress was the Chinese Empire, and more particularly the Yang-tse Valley, where, as usual, Germany had followed in the footsteps of Great Britain, and had profited by the labours of British pioneers. The Emperor determined to make his flag follow trade. Imaginative and practical aims were, as usual, united in his ambitions. He saw that great international issues were about to be raised in the Far East. The expansion of Russia toward the warm water, checked in the Near East and on the frontiers of the British-Indian Empire, was beginning to debouch in the Far East. The attitude of Great Britain towards this new portent, and the rise of

The Far  
East.

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

Japan as a highly-developed military and commercial Power, held out hopes of future conflicts and combinations in which Germany might play a profitable part, and thus increase her world-influence. If she prudently refrained, the great battle of world-interests might rage far away from her doors, and she might be regarded as a comparatively negligible quantity, a mere central European Power like Austria-Hungary.

From 1891 one of the periodical anti-foreign movements in China had been gathering strength, and had found vent in savage attacks upon Europeans. Many missionaries had been murdered, and Great Britain, among other Powers, had exacted reparation. The murder of some Catholic missionaries of German nationality in Shantung furnished William II. with a pretext for exhibiting himself and his Empire in the Far East in an attitude which, he thought, would impress the Chinese, and,

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

indeed, all Orientals, more profoundly than any measure which Great Britain or any other Power had previously adopted. He had also been stirred by the brilliant success of Japan in her war with China in 1894-95, and he had plunged into Far Eastern politics by obtaining the co-operation of Russia and France—Great Britain had declined to join him—in effecting the revision of the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the abandonment by Japan of the Liao-Tung peninsula. He, therefore, thought that he had deserved well of Russia, and that he would be able to count upon Russian support in his endeavour to eclipse the prestige of Great Britain in the Far East, and to push German influence and German trade at her expense.

↳ The story of the German seizure of Kiao-Chau in 1897 is characteristic of William II.'s methods. Russia, as the Kaiser knew, had cast her eyes upon Kiao-Chau Bay as a winter anchorage for her Far Eastern fleet.



## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

There was no time to be lost. The Tsar Nicholas II. was returning from a private visit to his brother-in-law, the Grand Duke of Hesse, and was avoiding, as he avoided whenever he could, a call at Berlin. William II. waylaid him at Homburg, and, in the course of a friendly conversation, dropped a remark about his desire to exact reparation for the murder of "his" missionaries, and in doing so to land troops in Kiaochau Bay. He hoped that his Imperial friend would offer no objections to this proceeding. Nicholas II. politely replied that he saw no objection from the Russian point of view. The conversation was confirmed and the apparently harmless consent recorded by a letter from William II. to Nicholas II., and the Kaiser felt that he had "bagged" the Russian Emperor's promise. Neither the Russian nor the German Foreign Office knew of the conversation, or, at any rate, of William II.'s view of its

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

significance at the time. Kiao-Chau was occupied in January, 1897, and the result was a violent exchange of diplomatic notes between Berlin and Petrograd (St. Petersburg). A somewhat timid South German, Baron von Rotenhahn, was at that time in charge of the German Foreign Office. He was frightened nearly out of his wits by the vigour of the Russian protests; but William II., when he heard of his agitation, laughed heartily, and assured his intimate friends that Rotenhahn might spare himself all this anxiety, as he (the Emperor) had the Tsar's promise in his pocket.

The Emperor himself, however, fell into a different kind of agitation about this period. His imagination became excited by the dream of world-policy and world-empire, which had, doubtless, never been absent from his mind. He sent out his sailor brother, Prince Henry of Prussia, with a squadron to establish Germany's grip on

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

Kiao-Chau—it was nominally leased from China for ninety-nine years—and he “let himself go” in a speech which he delivered over the champagne at a farewell dinner to the Prince and the officers of the expedition at Kiel. Prince Henry’s expedition, he said, was only the logical consequence of the unity of Germany and the establishment of the new German Empire as the result of the glorious victories of 1870. It was “only the first manifestation” of that Empire “in its tasks beyond the seas.” German commerce and German shipping must be protected in distant lands by the flag, like the interests of other nations. The Hanseatic League (a favourite theme) had done wonders in its day from the commercial point of view, but it had been bound to fail because it lacked protection by an Emperor and a great Empire. William II. continued: “May every European out there [in China], German merchants, and,

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

above all, the natives . . . clearly see that the German Michael" [the German counterpart of the British "John Bull"] "has firmly planted his escutcheon with the Imperial Eagle in the soil, in order to give protection once for all to those who ask for it. And may our countrymen out there, priests, or merchants, or whatever they may be, rest assured that the protection of the German Empire, in the form of the Emperor's warships, will steadfastly be youchsafed them. But if anyone should venture to wound or injure us in our good right, then up and at him with your mailed fist, and, please God, crown your youthful brows with a wreath of laurel which no one in the German Empire will grudge you! . . . His Royal Highness Prince Henry. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Prince Henry's reply showed how his

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

Imperial brother's ideas of grandiloquent <sup>عزله</sup> world-policy had spread to the rest of the Prussian Royal Family.

نو He was overwhelmed with the greatness of the mission with which the Emperor had entrusted him—a mission which opened a new era in the history of the nation. His gratitude for the honour was unbounded. As for himself, it was not honour and glory that attracted him:

“One thing alone draws me on. It is to publish in foreign lands to everyone who will listen and also to those who will not listen the gospel of your Majesty's hallowed person. This gospel I mean to have inscribed upon my banner, and I will inscribe it wherever I go. . . . I call upon those who are so fortunate as to be my comrades in this voyage to keep this day in their recollections, to imprint the person of the Emperor upon their minds, and to send forth into the world afar the

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

cry: 'Our most illustrious, our most high and mighty, our beloved Kaiser, King and Lord for ever and ever! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!'"

These speeches were in a style which was new to the German public, excepting those who knew the tone that prevailed in certain regimental messes on occasions when the wine-cup had freely circulated. Abroad the "mailed fist" became a byword for the aspirations and methods which the Emperor in his more restless moments was known to favour. The German Press halted between naïf, or forced, enthusiasm and depressing scepticism. A leading German journal attempted a defence of the speeches on the ground that they were purposely couched in popular language like that which commended itself to patriotic gatherings, such as those of the Societies of Army Veterans (*Kriegervereine*). The wisest observers found that a dangerous

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

personality and dangerous ambitions were asserting themselves in a fashion which might one day bring the gigantic engine of German armaments into deadly shock with the civilization of Europe. These varied impressions were deepened a few months later, when the Emperor, addressing naval recruits at Wilhelmshaven, and referring to the lease of Kiao-Chau from China, exclaimed: "Where the German Eagle has fixed his claws in a country, that country is German, and will remain German." = English, of course.

There was a lack of reticence about these declarations, which filled a good many Germans with misgivings. As Prince Bülow, from his characteristic Prussian point of view, observed in the Reichstag: ✕ "Frederick the Great may have pursued a Machiavellian policy, but he first published his 'Anti-Machiavel.'" It may, nevertheless, be admitted that the Emperor imitated his great predecessor—who, by

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

the way, has never been his real model—by publishing an “Anti-Machiavel” *after* most of his Machiavellian utterances. *Mundus vult decipi*, “the world wishes to be deceived,” and the success of many of these Imperial disclaimers, especially in Great Britain, was marvellous to those who were following events at close quarters in Berlin.

The policy of William II. during the succeeding years of the Chinese troubles was steadily, though not very skilfully, directed towards undermining British influence and ousting British trade in the Far East. The seizure of Kiao-Chau was speedily followed by an Agreement with China regarding preferential trading rights for Germany throughout the whole Province of Shantung. This Agreement was secretly concluded while the German Government was incessantly proclaiming the principle of the “open door” in China—a theory the object



## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

of which was to prevent any other Power, except Russia in the North, from following the German example and safeguarding its commercial interests by the occupation of Chinese ports or territories. Throughout this period—1897 to 1900—there was, on the part of Germany and her Emperor, a kind of nervous eagerness to assert something more than Germany's right to a "place in the sun" in China. The Emperor seemed determined that, apart from the expansion of Russia in the North which for various reasons it suited him to encourage, Germany was to pose as the Power specially interested in China; and where real vested interests of Germany did not exist, he made it his business to create them. In discussing with a German statesman, the late Baron von Richthofen, then Foreign Secretary, the German conception of the "open door" in China, the writer once reminded

The "Open  
Door" in  
China.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

him of the vast preponderance of British commercial interests in the Yang-tse Valley, and put the purely hypothetical question whether Germany would agree to Great Britain's acquiring from China the same kind of rights in that sphere which Germany had acquired in Shantung. The answer was: "Certainly not. That would be contrary to the principle of the 'open door.'" The obvious inference which suggested itself, and was emphasized by the writer, was that the rights acquired by Germany in Shantung must, therefore, be "contrary to the principle of the 'open door.'" "

It was during the Chinese troubles that the first Navy Law of the Emperor's reign was proposed and passed.

At the accession of William II. the German Navy, apart from a few cruisers and torpedo boats, had consisted of 12 battleships, most of them small vessels. The Law of 1898 laid down that within six

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

years the Fleet was to have a strength of 20 battleships, not including 8 existing ships for coast defence, 12 large and 28 small cruisers, with a large increase in torpedo craft. Each battleship was to be replaced after twenty-five years' service, each large cruiser after fifteen years, and each small cruiser after fifteen years. There was to be a commensurate increase in the personnel.

The measure was not taken very seriously in Great Britain, but in Germany it speedily became evident that the Emperor had been bitten by the ambition of naval aggrandizement. He seemed to dream and talk of nothing but sea-power. He had set his heart upon the passage of the Law of 1898, and in order to break the opposition of the Clerical Centre, he even made overtures to the handful of Poles, and decorated their leader, von Koscielski, who was ever afterwards popularly known as "Admiralski."

The intervention of the German "mailed

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

fist" in China likewise confirmed the aspirations of William II. towards what he called "a world-empire." On January 18, 1896,

World-  
policy

Germany had celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the new Empire. The Imperial speech to the Reichstag was couched in moderate and dignified terms. But in a speech delivered at a banquet in the evening the Emperor, in somewhat ambiguous language, laid down the basis of the claims of Germany to "world-influence." "The German Empire," he said, "has become a world-empire. German goods, German learning, German industry, go across the ocean. The value of German commodities carried on the seas amounts to thousands of millions [of marks]. Upon you, gentlemen [the members of the Reichstag], devolves the solemn duty of aiding me in linking this Greater German Empire to the Empire at home."

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

Earlier in the day, after the formal Speech from the Throne, the Emperor had dramatically produced the flag of the 1st Foot Guards, the premier regiment in the Army, and, lowering it before the Assembly, had sworn upon it to "champion the honour of the nation and Empire at home and abroad." In the evening he told the Reichstag that this oath could be fulfilled only if the deputies patriotically gave him their complete support. This meant that they should unhesitatingly vote all his naval and military Bills. And, indeed, it proved impossible, even for those who entertained strong financial or political scruples, to resist such appeals. With the exception of the Social Democrats and a diminishing handful of Radicals, no party after the Navy Law of 1898 offered any serious opposition to the main features of the successive schemes for strengthening the national defences.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

In 1899 and 1900 the Boxer movement in China, the international expedition by Admiral Seymour, the murder of the German Minister in Peking, Baron von Ketteler, and the siege of the Legations, had roused the civilized world. In the Emperor William's mind the excitement had been intensified by other events in distant spheres of that world-theatre which now absorbed his attention and his ambitions. The Transvaal question, the Spanish-American War, and the South African War had contributed to stimulate his imagination and, as it often seemed, to unbalance his judgment. He appeared to aim at making himself the spokesman of Europe and of America. He is fond of drawing and painting in his leisure hours and he had produced an extraordinary allegorical picture representing what he conceived to be the "Yellow Peril" from the Far East. The Great Powers were represented as mailed female

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

figures standing on a lofty rock overlooking a storm-swept plain dotted with towns and citadels. Great Britain was hesitating in the background, but Germany was in the van leading on Russia and France. The "Yellow Peril" was represented by Buddha—of all deities—seated on a thick cloud, from which fire and destruction were rained down upon defenceless civilization. The Archangel Michael, with flaming sword, was encouraging the Powers to intervene. The picture, reproduced in hundreds of thousands, met with the approval of uncritical German patriots of certain classes. Copies were presented by the Emperor to personal friends, Royal and other, and to foreign Ambassadors in Berlin, who were discreetly uncritical. To-day (August, 1914), this primitive work of art might, with a very little alteration, be converted into an allegory of the German raid upon Belgium

The  
"Yellow  
Peril."

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

and the destruction of Louvain. The figure seated on the thick cloud would no longer be the peaceful Buddha, but would be appropriately arrayed in Prussian jackboots and spiked helmet. The nations of Europe are ranging themselves to defend their hearths and their homes against a nearer peril than that of the Boxers.

The dangerous state of the Kaiser's mind and imagination was further illustrated by his proceedings during the preparation for the international expedition to Peking. Germany, he felt, ought to take the lead, and there must be a German Commander-in-Chief. His old personal friend, Count Waldersee, for a time Chief of the German General Staff, was selected for the post, and, in order to give the selection due *éclat*, it was represented as having originated in a request from the Tsar. The "theatricalities" attending Count Waldersee's departure alienated educated German



## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

opinion. The more independent sections of the German Press began to deprecate the *Waldersee-Rummel* and the speech-making, Imperial and other, by which it was characterized. When the expedition reached Peking, which had previously been relieved by the Allies, it found occupation in various punitive expeditions, and in the pacification of disturbed districts. The proceedings of some of the contingents were stained by outrages upon inoffensive Chinese, men and women, in which the German contingent specially distinguished itself. The German misdeeds were reported home to Germany in letters from private soldiers, which the Socialist and some other journals published under the rubric of "Letters from the Huns." This appellation was derived from an excited speech which William II. had addressed at Bremerhaven to a body of German troops about to embark for China.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

He spoke with evident emotion. "When you come into touch with the enemy," he said, "give no quarter, make no prisoners. A thousand years ago the Huns, under their King, Attila, made themselves a name which still lives in tradition. Do you likewise strike home, so that for a thousand years to come no Chinaman may ever again dare to look askance at a German! The blessing of God be with you, the prayers of a whole nation, and my blessing! Open up the path for civilization once for all!"

Many Germans doubted the wisdom and also the dignity of such appeals by the Head of the German Empire; but the habit of this style of eloquence grew upon the Emperor, and his exhortations seemed to find some response among uncultivated sections of the people and of the officer class, as their deeds in China and recently in Belgium have shown.

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

The Emperor at this epoch was extremely active as a public speaker. His oratorical achievements had already given rise in Germany to many popular witticisms, and to comparisons between him and his less demonstrative predecessors. But nothing could stop him when he was upon the war-path of oratory. In a speech about himself and his ancestors which he delivered at Bielefeld in August, 1900, he declared in the high Cambyses vein that the troops which had gone out to China were destined to "show that the arm of the German Emperor reached to the farthest ends of the earth." He keenly relished spectacles of the panoply and the trophies of war. It was characteristic that he caused to be removed from the walls of Peking the astronomical instruments which had been erected there two centuries earlier by the Jesuits, and had them brought to Potsdam. He showed that he looked for-

Theatrical  
side of  
world-  
policy.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

ward with keen expectations to the Chinese Mission of Expiation, headed by the Imperial Prince Chun-Tsi-Fong, which he had insisted should come to Germany and express ceremonious regret for the assassination of the German Minister. The impressiveness of the Mission and of the ceremony was unfortunately impaired by an unseemly delay which took place during the Mission's journey through Germany until the question could be settled whether the Chinese Prince should perform the "Kowtow" before William II. at Potsdam. The solemnity and the sarcasm with which this point was debated by different sections of the German Press rendered the reception of the Mission an anti-climax.

The German adventure in China was too prolonged to suit the temper of the German people. Count Waldersee returned home in June, 1901, but long before then it had been officially admitted that the nation was

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

“tired of China” (*China-müde*). The practical achievement of the enterprise had been the signature of the Anglo-German Agreement (October, 1900), establishing anew the principles of the “open door” and of the territorial integrity of China, with the limitations illustrated by the Russian occupation of the Liao-Tung peninsula, the German seizure of Kiao-Chau, the Shantung Treaty, and the British occupation of Wei-hai-Wei. The real object of the Agreement, which came to be known as the “Yang-tse Agreement,” was to check British commercial predominance in the Yang-tse Valley; and in order to impress the world with this policy the German Commander-in-Chief had not hesitated during the expedition to land German troops at Shanghai. A concurrent object of German endeavours was to lure Russia into enterprises of territorial expansion in the Far East, which would weaken her in

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Europe, and bring her into conflict with Japan and, perhaps, with Great Britain.

**The Russo-Japanese War.** In the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) which ensued, Great

Britain, in accordance with an undertaking given to Japan, "kept the ring" for the combatants, and the policy of the German Emperor was to keep on terms with both of them. This was illustrated by his curious action at the close of the war in bestowing the high Prussian decoration, *Pour le Mérite*, simultaneously upon the Russian General Stössel, the defender of Port Arthur, and upon the Japanese General Nogi, who successfully assailed it. William II., it was clear, hoped great things from the Russo-Japanese rivalry, and from the part played by Great Britain in it. It was from Germany that the rumours emanated which caused a panic in Admiral Roszhdestvensky's fleet off the Dogger Bank, and the consequent firing upon inoffensive British

## WILLIAM II. AND FOREIGN POLICY

fishermen; but French influence was happily able to secure a settlement of that extremely perilous incident by arbitration. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, concluded in September, 1905, seemed to the Emperor and his Government to hold out further hopes of conflict between Russia and Great Britain, and he was entirely unable to foresee the possibility of the Anglo-Russian and Russo-Japanese understandings, which at this hour (September 1, 1914) have ranged the three Powers as the allies of France in the great world-struggle now being waged with Germany and Austria-Hungary.

## IV

### WILLIAM II. AND GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

THE tension of the Emperor's mind, as revealed by his acts and utterances during the Chinese crisis, was due to the anxieties and ambitions by which he was harassed at this juncture in consequence of a multitude of acute international difficulties and conflicts, in which he desired to play a prominent part. He had initiated an active Colonial policy, and had Colonial ambitions in every quarter of the globe. He flattered himself that the rapidly-increasing power and wealth of the German Empire ought to attract into the orbit of its influence the lesser—and of these particularly the Northern—States of Europe, Norway and Swe-



## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

en, Denmark, Belgium, and Holland. Whatever may have been the mingled elements in his feelings towards Great Britain and the British Empire, he evidently intended to call a halt to the growth of British influence throughout the world, and he was especially jealous of the intimate and cordial relations subsisting between the Governments and peoples of Great Britain and the United States of America. The world-wide recognition of German might and German influence to which he aspired, the expansion of German trade which he promoted, the development of German shipping and the growth of the German Navy, were all factors which made him look eagerly around for territorial bases upon which to establish his new edifice of world-policy. And events were happening which threatened to affect profoundly the great speculative enterprise of World-Empire upon which he dreamed that he had success-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

fully embarked. "Remember," he is reported to have said to some of the leading German officers who accompanied Count Waldersee to China, "remember that this may be our last chance of founding beyond the seas a rival Empire to that of the British in India."

Among the governing and the leisured classes in Germany there was an increasing number of persons who took delight in the study of Colonial questions and problems of world-power with the aid of maps, books, and the recitals of German explorers and Colonial pioneers. Practical difficulties were disregarded; great theories and ambitions were in the air. There was no place in Europe where it was more difficult to obtain the kind of social recognition for which the German of the wealthy and upper middle classes had begun to crave than in Berlin. The Court was jealously fenced by the traditions of the

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

higher *noblesse*, the military caste and the official hierarchy. One of the pioneers of the Colonial movement in Germany once remarked to the writer that in Berlin no one counted unless he were a Privy Councillor—a *Geheimrat*, or Government official of the higher ranks—or a General. The interest of the Emperor in world-problems opened up a new path to recognition, and the *Africareisender*, the African traveller, who often was a candidate for a Government post in the young German Colonies, became a kind of personage in the German capital.

There might be said to be three "proletariats" in Germany—the labouring population, who, with the exception of the important Roman Catholic element, are mostly Social Democrats; the proletariat of the *petite noblesse*, who are mostly proud and poor; and the proletariat of those who have received a University or, at any rate, a higher school education. The first class is

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

hostile to World-Imperialism, and indeed to all manifestations of aggressive policy. The second class is on the outlook for any national enterprise which promises to give its members employment and their daily bread in positions conformable to their high opinion of their own dignity and of their hereditary claims upon the State. The third class largely suffers from unemployment or from inadequate remuneration. Its members study the writings of those who, like Treitschke and lesser lights, such as Dr. Peters, extol the world-mission of Germany, and indulge in detraction of the position and achievements of other Powers. They are fired with the ambition of being the intellectual apostles of a German World-Empire, of ousting other civilizations, especially the British, and of replacing them with inchoate, confused, and often semi-barbarous German ideals. Whatever may be the driving-pow-

The German  
"pro-  
letariats."

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

er of the German intellect—and it is undoubtedly very great—there can be no more profound mistake than to imagine that German culture, which in individuals and in small cliques attains a high level, is widespread among the people, or even among the academically educated. Specialization, undeveloped social conditions, certain historical handicaps, which are Germany's misfortune rather than her fault, and, above all, the furious development of material wealth and enterprise in communities which were recently very primitive—all these factors have tended to retard among the people that culture of the soul and heart, in respect of which eminent individual Germans have contributed so large a share to the world's stock. In Prussia, above all, the almost fanatical cult of militarism and of the doctrine of the State has atrophied true progress and refinement among all except certain well-known sec-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

tions of the intellectually and socially more privileged classes.

Harassed by problems of domestic politics, attacked by the mordant pens of Bismarckian, Socialist, and Radical journalists and pamphleteers, criticized in turn by the *noblesse* of his own Court and the intellect of the Universities, canvassed even in the ranks of his own officers under the nickname of "Lieutenant Müller," the Emperor looked wistfully about for a following of men who would acclaim him in the sense of the fabled devotion of the Brandenburgers to their old Margraves. His appeals in this sense in his public utterances are unceasing. At the time of Bismarck's resignation he had cried: "Those who are willing to help me in my endeavours are cordially welcome; those who oppose me I will smash (*zerschmettern*)."

William II's personal difficulties.

And again he complained: "I know very well that attempts are being

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

made to spread alarm. The spirit of disobedience is slinking through the land; clad in a seductive guise, it is trying to confuse the minds of the men who are devoted to me; it employs an ocean of printer's ink to obscure the paths, which are as clear as day to everyone who knows me and my principles. . . . Brandenburgers! Your Margrave speaks to you! Follow him through thick and thin wherever he leads you!"

The Emperor was feeling the pulse of public opinion, and through all his appeals and even his menaces it was evident that he was eager to put himself in accord with public feeling.

His attitude towards Great Britain was one of the points on which differences of opinion had arisen. It is too early, even in view of evidence of his conduct at the outbreak of the present war, to pronounce upon the character of the feelings with which William II. was animated towards

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Great Britain at different periods of his reign. There was no doubt, on the other hand, as to the growing hostility to England among numerous and influential sections of his people. Those who grumbled at his general conduct of policy (*die Nörgler*) criticized as much as anything his manifest enjoyment of his visits to England, and the friendly language which he adopted when he was among Englishmen. William II. has frequently been very unpopular in Germany, but it may safely be said that he was never more unpopular than when he seemed to German eyes to be courting England, and never more popular than when, by a sudden outburst—a telegram or a speech—he seemed to fling down a challenge to Great Britain. The Chancellor who succeeded Caprivi was Prince Chlodwig Hohenlohe, a Bavarian statesman with a distinguished past, a former German Ambassador in Paris, and afterwards Statthalter of Alsace-



## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

Lorraine. Prince Hohenlohe, who was over seventy-six when he unwillingly became Chancellor, was selected by the Emperor rather as a figurehead than for any other reason, although he had a grasp of Bismarckian principles of foreign policy, and, as a member of a mediatized German dynasty, was in personal relations with the ruling Houses of Europe. Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, a Baden lawyer of great subtlety and Parliamentary resource, who at a later date was to play a prominent diplomatic part as German Ambassador at Constantinople, was in charge of the Foreign Office. Neither of these statesmen had much personal acquaintance with British affairs or with the elements of British Imperial policy. Their main object was, in accordance with the Emperor's own designs, to lure Great Britain into an *entente* with Germany, and to intimidate her by the threat of isolation. When,

**The Kruger telegram.**

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

in the last days of December, 1895, the unfortunate Jameson raid into the Transvaal took place, there was a great outbreak of indignation in Germany which these statesmen shared, and which they thought could be turned to diplomatic account. The action of the Emperor jumped with their conclusions. It was on his way back from Kiel to Berlin that he hurriedly composed the bombshell of his famous telegram of January 3, 1896, to Mr. Kruger, in which he congratulated the President of the South African Republic upon having repelled the raid "without invoking the aid of the friendly Powers." It may safely be said that, from the Emperor's own point of view, the telegram was the greatest mistake of William II.'s reign. If his previous and subsequent professions of friendship for Great Britain were sincere, he had, by suggesting foreign intervention in South Africa, at once raised among his own

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

people a fire of hatred which was never to be extinguished, and he had awakened in England suspicions which were never to be wholly eradicated. If he was throughout insincere, he had let the cat out of the bag, and Great Britain was forewarned. There is plenty of evidence that he soon came to see these bearings of his rash act, since he subsequently shrank from no effort, and, it might almost be added, from no personal humiliation in his attempts to efface the impression that had been created in England. His reception of Cecil Rhodes in Berlin, to whose comments upon the telegram he listened in patient silence; his repeated visits to England, and especially his visit on the occasion of Queen Victoria's death; his almost suppliant attitude when he solicited marks of British friendship, like the honorary colonelcy of a regiment—all these things were, in his view, in the order of reparation, and they recalled the

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

self-abasement of Frederick William IV. (*le roi poltron*), before the Tsar Nicholas I. William II. could not, however, extricate himself and his Government at home from the toils of the policy which he had initiated. His telegram had been received with frantic applause in Germany. Prince Hohenlohe and Baron Marschall had to continue the battle with diplomatic batteries which had been fatally unmasked. The Emperor himself was expected by his people to live up to the Kruger telegram, and he could satisfy their anti-British tendencies only by prosecuting that policy of naval expansion which accorded only too well with his own ambitious inclinations. On the whole, there can be no room for doubt with regard to the origin of the Kruger telegram. The German Government, with the Emperor's approval, and, perhaps, on his initiative, had long before the Jameson raid been cultivating with the South African Repub-

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

lic relations which were inconsistent with British suzerainty and with British treaty rights to control the foreign policy of the Transvaal. The writer had previous proofs of the foolish ambitions with regard to not only the Transvaal, but the whole of British South Africa, which animated the Colonial party in Germany. Bismarck himself had, in 1884, encouraged Mr. Kruger, when he visited Berlin and was entertained at the table of William I. in the Royal castle of Berlin. Shortly before the raid German gunboats had demonstratively fired salutes in Delagoa Bay on Kruger's birthday. And the intended despatch of German blue-jackets to Pretoria at the time of the raid was designed to establish and exhibit German political interest in the Transvaal Question. Indeed, a circular despatch of Baron von Marschall's sent out a few weeks after the Emperor's telegram frankly asserted this interest. When this despatch

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

was cited in the House of Commons towards the close of the South African War, the German Foreign Office had to describe the reference to it as "a mere historical reminiscence," and it was of even less significance, doubtless, in German eyes, than the "scrap of paper" which guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium.

During the South African War the attitude of Germany was professedly neutral amid a tornado of German popular protest and denunciation of Great Britain. At Prince Hohenlohe's own table the talk was violently anti-British, and one of his friends, an official who daily lunched with him, reported that most of those whom he met there spoke wildly of the feasibility of sending out a German Army Corps to help the Boers.

The Emperor bitterly felt that his telegram had unmasked the rancours and the ambitions of his people. Henceforward

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

he had to play a double part, comparable to that which he had played in his personal relations with the "exiled" Bismarck, with whom, much against Bismarck's own will, he had to pretend to be reconciled. He had to try to allay the just suspicions of Great Britain, and he had to explain his real objects to his frenzied people. The first of these tasks he took upon himself, the other he left to the more practised Machiavellianism of Herr (afterwards Prince) von Bülow. The Imperial visit to England on the occasion of the death and funeral of Queen Victoria undoubtedly made a deep impression upon the British people. It would still be difficult to decide how far the behaviour of the Emperor, on the death of his Royal grandmother, was due to genuine family feeling, and how far it was dictated by policy. In the mind of a Prussian Sovereign it is always difficult to distinguish such currents. The

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Emperor has once and again shown that he can put his impulses and sentiments at the service of his policy, and that he easily confounds his ambitions, his inclinations, and even his rancours with his duty. The present writer witnessed William II.'s incursion into Copenhagen for the funeral of the late King Christian IX. His presence was obviously painful to some of the members of the Danish Royal Family. After having been received with demonstrations of popular antipathy on the occasion of his first visit to Denmark, he had persistently returned to the attack. In 1903 he had managed to be present at the celebration of King Christian's eighty-fifth birthday, when he got himself appointed an Admiral of the Danish Fleet, and bestowed upon the King a Prussian Uhlan regiment. A brave people, which can never forget the wound inflicted by the Prussian conquest of Schleswig-Holstein in 1864, which knows how Prus-



## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

sia treated the Danes of Schleswig,<sup>1</sup> and which saw with satisfaction that its Court had hitherto remained uninfected by Prussian influences, had to read the telegram in which the grandson of its foe in insinuating language telegraphed to King Christian his gratitude "that you have received me into your family circle," and asked the King to be assured "that I henceforth feel myself to be a son of your house." The personal policy of the Emperor in his dealings with Foreign Courts is on a line with that of the German Government in its diplomacy, and its motto is: "*Sois mon frère ou je te tue.*"

In the article by William II. which the *Daily Telegraph* published on October 28, 1908, the Imperial journalist tried to make out that his attitude throughout the South Afri-

The High-cliffe indiscretion.

<sup>1</sup> So patriotic a Prussian Professor as Dr. Hans Delbrück was fined a few years ago for writing that the Prussian treatment of the Schleswigers "cried to Heaven."

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

can War was consistently governed by friendliness towards the British cause. He referred, among other things, to the military counsels which he had personally addressed to the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII. These counsels were embodied in a manuscript entitled "Aphorisms on the War in South Africa." They were drawn up in the darkest days of the war, and they culminated in the advice to withdraw the British forces to Cape Town and to Durban, and there to reconstitute them before resuming the offensive. It is easy to imagine what would probably have been the result of the war if this sapient advice had been followed. And there is no difficulty in inferring what in such circumstances would have been the policy of Germany.

William II. further claimed that during the war he had frustrated attempts at intervention by other Powers. As far back as the date of the Kruger telegram, January 3,

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

1896, the Emperor's Government had been sounding France as to her willingness to join in a movement for the support of the South African Republic against the Suzerain Power, Great Britain. The German Foreign Secretary, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, called upon M. Herbette, the French Ambassador in Berlin, the day before the Emperor's telegram was despatched, and asked if France would join in diplomatic action. France, it must be remembered, was not at that time our friend, and was still smarting under the Fashoda incident. M. Herbette, nevertheless, replied that France had no particular interest in South Africa, and he inquired what Germany was prepared to offer for French support. Was she willing to back France in the Egyptian Question? Baron Marschall was unable to hold out any such prospect, whereupon M. Herbette frankly replied that, even before consulting his Government, he was

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

convinced that France could not interest herself in German projects with regard to South Africa.

In November, 1899, after the investment of Ladysmith, and again, in February, 1900, William II. endeavoured to lead Russia and France into a dangerous trap by encouraging the suggestions of intervention, which were then put forward by the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Muravieff. Muravieff had sounded M. Delcassé, then at the head of the French Foreign Office, but M. Delcassé declined to entertain the idea of anything more than friendly representations to the two combatants in the sense of those which had been made at the outbreak of the war between America and Spain. Very different was Count Muravieff's reception at Potsdam, where he saw the Emperor and Prince Bülow during the Tsar's visit to the Prussian Court. William II. at first received

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

his suggestions with manifestations of sympathy, but shortly afterwards the German Government, which manifestly contemplated a far-reaching kind of intervention, informed the Russian Government that action of this nature might be a serious matter —*un acte grave, une œuvre de longue haleine*— and that a necessary preliminary would be a joint guarantee by Germany, Russia, and France, of the integrity of their respective territories. France at once saw the trap, which meant nothing else than a fresh ratification of the Treaty of Frankfort, perpetuating the German occupation of Alsace-Lorraine, and the scheme accordingly collapsed. William II., however, had, he thought, gained one important point. He had obtained material for a denunciation of France and Russia to Great Britain, and he at once carried the news of the alleged “intervention” scheme piping hot

European  
intervention  
in the Boer  
War.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

to the British Government. He had previously engaged in a private campaign against that Government, and had tried to lead France and Russia on by enlarging upon *le peril Anglais* and upon "British encroachments" to the French Ambassador in Berlin, the Marquis de Noailles, and to the Russian Ambassador, Count Osten-Sacken. The comments of a Berlin journal, the *Taegliche Rundschau*, upon the Emperor's manifesto in the *Daily Telegraph* were very much to the point. The Berlin journal condemned the Emperor's personal policy "which sees only the goal and fails to follow the paths by which alone that goal can be attained, a policy which wants to take the whole world under its wing, and, when it creates unrest and reaps a harvest of mistrust, complains that it is always being misunderstood. As to the South African War," the *Taegliche Rundschau* continued, "there was during the Boer War a diver-

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

gence of opinion between the German people and the German Government, and *the policy of the day was conducted on the principle of book-keeping by double entry.*" To vary the metaphor, Germany, as often before and since, was running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. In the opinion of the writer, and of far more competent students of those events, the South African War would never have had to be fought but for Germany's intrigues in South Africa.

During the progress of the war Germany, to the knowledge of European diplomats, was constantly extending her hand behind her back in the attitude of a demand for "baksheesh." The embarrassment of England was her opportunity, and her acquisition of Samoa, now happily secured for the Empire by New Zealand (September, 1914), was one of her ill-gotten gains of this period. The hostility of the governing

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

section of the German nation to Great Britain and its insatiable ambition were being employed by the Emperor **Hostility to Great Britain and naval rivalry.** in order to further his scheme for creating a German Navy which should be on a level, as he declared, with the German Army, and should therefore be in a position to enable Germany to inflict upon Great Britain the horrors which his army is now inflicting upon Belgium and France (September, 1914). This aim was so patent to every eye that his designs were frustrated by the British sense of sea-power as a supreme national necessity. . The British nation likewise endorsed the diplomacy of Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Grey, which created and fortified its friendships with France and Russia, friendships now cemented under the pressure of a great war into a great European Alliance, which is supplemented by the invaluable Alliance



## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

with Japan. But the nation could not foresee the iron necessity that support of its Allies against German aggression would ultimately entail intervention under modern conditions with a land force adequate in numbers and equipment as well as in quality. What an ordeal would the British Empire and the world have been spared to-day if Great Britain had possessed an army of 500,000 men approaching in efficiency the British troops which are now covering themselves with glory by the side of their Allies and comrades in France?

The war between America and Spain in 1898 had also furnished fuel for the German Navy agitation. At one historic moment the war had nearly brought the American naval forces under Admiral Dewey, then about to open the bombardment of Manila, into armed conflict with a German squadron under Admiral Diedrichs, when that squadron, on the pretext of observing the opera-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

tions, ventured to place itself in the line of fire. Admiral Diedrichs endeavoured to ascertain from Admiral Chichester what line of action the British Fleet would follow if hostilities broke out between the German and the American forces. The British Admiral's significant reply was: "That is a secret known only to Admiral Dewey and myself." The Emperor swiftly grasped the danger of alienating American sympathies; indeed, he henceforth extended the sphere of his personal blandishments in order to win American opinion. An attempt of the semi-official Press apparatus to commit the German Government to a declaration that Germany was specially interested in the ultimate fate of the Spanish possessions in the Malay Archipelago was summarily disavowed. German action with regard to the derelict Spanish islands was reserved till the close of the war, when the Caroline, Pelew, and Marianne groups

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

were acquired by purchase from Spain. These acquisitions were described by Prince Bülow as constituting, like Samoa, arches in the future bridge of German interests and influence in the Pacific. If Germany at the time of the Spanish-American War had possessed a powerful navy, or if Great Britain had not identified American interests in that war with her own, the action of Germany would assuredly have been far more aggressive at Manila than it was. In order to dispel this conviction in the United States, a violent anti-British campaign was initiated by the then German Ambassador at Washington, Dr. von Holleben, and was prosecuted with unscrupulous rancour during the American visit of the Emperor's brother, Prince Henry of Prussia. The main element in this campaign was an attack upon one of the most highly-valued Ambassadors that Great Britain has ever sent to America

*Courting  
America.*

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

—Lord Pauncefote. He was accused of having been the personal author of the friendly representations in favour of peace which were conjointly made to America by all the neutral Powers before the war began. Great Britain consistently refused to associate herself during the war with proposals from other quarters which seemed to have the appearance of putting pressure upon the Government of the United States. The Emperor speedily realized that all such efforts were futile, since he wrote upon the margin of a despatch on the subject of diplomatic intervention: "They (the United States Government) would snap their fingers at it" (*sie pffiffen darauf*). The death of Lord Pauncefote at his post furnished the President and Government of the United States with an opportunity of showing how great had been the regard in which the British Ambassador was held in America, and how unreserved the confidence

## GERMAN WORLD-POLICY

which was felt in his uprightness. The failure of Dr. von Holleben's campaign and his errors in the Venezuelan negotiations, led to his recall, and his departure from America had to be so precipitous that he did not even take formal leave of President Roosevelt or of Mr. Secretary Hay. The New York correspondent of *The Times* wrote: "No agent could have accomplished what the Emperor wished. The real responsibility for what he disliked in the present relations between Germany and the United States rests not on Dr. von Holleben, but on himself." A statue of Frederick the Great, which the Emperor had sent to Washington as a peace offering, did not serve to impress Americans either with the superiority of German art, or with the merits of Germany's Machiavellian policy.

## V

### WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY: CHECKS AND DISASTERS

AFTER the South African War there was a lull in the German attempts to extract "baksheesh" from Great Britain in the shape of islands and coaling-stations. The naval policy of the Emperor was pursued with all the greater intensity of effort. The second Navy Act of the reign had, in 1900, patently inaugurated a direct competition in naval armaments. It laid down that the German Navy was to attain, by the year 1917, a strength of 38 battleships, 14 large cruisers, 38 small cruisers, and 97 torpedo destroyers. The personnel was, of course, to be greatly increased. In 1906

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

and 1908 amendments of the Navy Act were effected in view of change in the Dreadnought type. In 1912 the fresh amendments which were adopted practically amounted to a new law. The changes which these amendments enacted were to be completed by the year 1920. There was an addition of three ships to the battle squadrons, and a great increase in the peace strength was unobtrusively effected by keeping the reserve squadrons always in commission.

In England the public began to realize that the relative strength of the German Navy was not to be estimated solely by the comparative numbers of the fighting units. The super-Dreadnought type was the only kind of battleship which Germany was now building, and this fact necessitated a building policy on the part of Great Britain, which was based upon a comparison of the

**The new  
German  
Navy.**

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

numbers of the highest types of ships in the two navies. Another point of the first importance was the strategic dispositions of the German Navy. It was almost wholly retained in German waters with Kiel and Wilhelmshaven as its bases, so that it became a constant menace to the British East Coast and to British shipping in the event of war. The British dispositions had to be altered accordingly. The construction of a great naval base at Rosyth was hurried forward, Harwich was converted into a strong naval harbour, and the bulk of the British squadrons were concentrated for employment in the North Sea.

It was amazing to observe with what petulance William II. commented upon these elementary British measures of precaution. He evidently regarded it as unfriendly on the British side to make any counter-preparations at all, and he seemed



## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

to think that his personal endeavours to fascinate and reassure British Ministers and the British public ought to produce an attitude of complete indifference to German action within a short distance of our shores. "You complain of my concentrating my ships in home waters," he said on one occasion. "What the devil (*sic*) can I do? You will not allow me to acquire coaling-stations or islands, and I have nowhere to send my ships." At one time he had so far succeeded in establishing relations of "confidence" with a First Lord of the British Admiralty that he actually obtained a copy of the Navy Estimates before they were submitted to Parliament. Meanwhile he regarded his honorary rank of Admiral of the Fleet in the British Navy as entitling him to descend in person upon any British squadron which lay on his route as a traveller, to visit the Admirals and inspect their ships, attended by his own

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

expert staff. Yet he could not refrain at times from indulging in high-flown reminders to Great Britain of the progress which William II. his own Navy had achieved, and and naval he usually thought it enough to rivalry with qualify these reminders by a Great Britain. general expression of the pious hope that the two flags would always float together in amity and never meet in conflict. During the years of his most strenuous endeavours to commend the cause of a Great Navy to the German people he had never measured his language, and it was frequently aggressive. In his annual speech to the officers of the Berlin garrison on New Year's Day, 1900, he had proclaimed: "Like my grandfather in the case of the Army, I, in the case of my Navy, will continue to carry out and complete the work of reorganization, allowing nothing to disconcert me; so that my Navy may take its place on an equal footing by the side

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

of my forces on land, and *that, by means of the Navy, the German Empire may be in a position abroad to achieve the rank which it has not yet attained.*"

At the launch of the battleship *Wittelsbach* in the summer of the same year he had said, addressing Prince Rupert of Bavaria: "Your Royal Highness will have noted how mightily the waves of the ocean beat at the door of our nation, and compel it as a great people to maintain its place in the world—in a word, to pursue a world-policy. The ocean is indispensable for Germany's greatness. But the ocean also shows that upon it, and far away beyond it, no great decision can now be taken without Germany and the German Emperor." This was merely an amplification of what he had declared at Cologne in 1897. A symbolical relief, the base of a monument to his grandfather which he had just unveiled, represented Neptune with his trident. It

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

suggested to the Emperor his famous outburst: "The trident ought to be in our fist, and I think that the citizens of Cologne are among the townsfolk who understand this best." He went on to claim that peace was essentially a German product. "It is thus my wish," he said, "that God may enable me to walk in the footsteps of my grandfather to preserve peace for the world—*peace which indeed only exists since the German Empire has been restored*; that He will enable me abroad to hold high the honour of the Empire in every way, and to secure and maintain for the labour of our country and for the industry of the producing classes, those markets which we require." At Hamburg a year later he summarily declared: "Our future is on the water." In taking leave of the Tsar on one occasion in Russian waters he had actually signalled: "The Admiral of the Atlantic greets the Admiral of the Pacific!"

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

In June, 1904, King Edward VII. paid a visit to the Emperor at Kiel, and, in reply to the speech in which William II. toasted him on board the Imperial Yacht *Hohenzollern*, he was careful to refer to the non-political circumstances of his visit, to the Kiel Yachting Week, and to the family relationship which connected his House with that of his host. He felt sure that the Emperor, like himself, was strenuously endeavouring to maintain the peace of the world, and he hoped that the flags of the two Navies might fly together for the maintenance of that peace. The speeches of William II. and Edward VII. <sup>King</sup> at the banquet on the Imperial <sup>Edward VII.</sup> Yacht, and the non-political utterances of the two monarchs at a dinner of the Imperial Yacht Club, were regarded by everyone who was present as summing up and exhausting the whole significance of the visit. The writer well remembers the surprise

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

with which the publication of a further speech by the Emperor was received. It was delivered at a dinner, supposed to be more or less of a private character, which Prince Henry of Prussia gave at Kiel Castle in honour of the King. The Emperor seized the occasion of the presence of King Edward and the chief naval officers of the Kiel station in order to give an account of the origin of his own naval ambitions. He explained that when he visited England as a boy with his parents he had seen at Portsmouth and at Plymouth the growth of those giant ironclads which at that epoch represented the naval power of Great Britain. In view of those impressions of the Emperor's boyhood King Edward would understand how, when he came to the throne, he had tried to reproduce what he had seen in England in a manner corresponding to the circumstances of his own country. He further referred to the com-

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

radeship which had existed between the officers and men of the British and German Navies during the China Expedition, and to the hospitality of the British Navy all over the world. The King had evidently not expected to have to reply to another Imperial speech, but he gracefully referred to the Emperor's well-known interest in the British Navy, and hoped that the friendly feelings between it and the German Fleet would continue. After this exchange of courtesies the Emperor manifestly hoped that the growth of the German Navy would be regarded in England as a matter which need excite no concern, but merely a benevolent interest. He seemed to consider that he had settled the whole question by his personal declarations. Those personal assurances and compliments always brought to the writer's recollection a remark that was frequently made in Germany at the time when the German Reichstag and Press

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

were protesting against the Emperor's long visit to England during the South African War, and his bestowal of the highest Prussian order upon Lord Roberts. The remark was: "He doubtless has reasons of his own for what he is doing."

In the year 1905 the South African Question had disappeared from Germany's system of "double book-keeping." The British settlement of the country had convinced German opinion that the effects of the German Imperial and popular demonstrations in furtherance of a permanent breach between the British and Dutch populations had produced no result beyond helping to provoke a costly and bloody war ending in a permanent peace to the advantage of both the contending parties. A revolt in the German Colony of South-West Africa had strained to the uttermost the expeditionary resources of the German Empire,

South  
African  
disappoint-  
ments.



## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

and had led to a Parliamentary crisis, in which by the vote of the Catholic Centre the Government was defeated. The experiences of the German troops in the suppression of the rebellion led many Germans to revise their estimate of the difficulties of "little Colonial wars," such as Great Britain had frequently had to wage. Japan's success in the great Russo-Japanese conflict had only strengthened the position of Great Britain in the Far East, without involving her in any quarrel with Russia. The German people was sick of China (*China-müde*), and the sails of German Imperial world-policy were languidly flapping for want of a breeze from any quarter of the globe. The aggressive section of the German nation was chafing impatiently under German inactivity and the Emperor had special reasons for sharing its dissatisfaction.

In 1904 Lord Lansdowne and M. Del-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

cassé had concluded the Morocco Agreement, and a general settlement of outstanding differences between Great Britain and France had been effected as the prelude to an *entente cordiale* between the two nations. There was naturally much comment in Germany on this important development, but Count Bülow, as he then was, made a reassuring statement in the Reichstag to the effect that there was "no ground for supposing that the Anglo-French Agreement was in any way directed against any other Power." It was, therefore, a bolt from the blue, like the Kruger telegram, when the Emperor, at the outset of a Mediterranean cruise, put into Tangier on March 31, 1905, and delivered a number of speeches to the German Colony and to the members of a deputation from the Sultan of Morocco, Abdul-Aziz. William II. declared that his policy was equal commercial rights for all in Morocco, and that they could only be

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

secured by the sovereignty of the Sultan and by the independence of the country. There was no dubiety on either point in Germany, and he himself, he demonstratively declared, was "prepared always to champion this policy."

The Tangier visit marked the outbreak of a fresh period of feverish energy on the part of the Emperor, and a fresh episode in the world-policy of the German Government. It was now evident that William II. had cast aside the traditional conventions of international intercourse between the heads of European States. No other Sovereign or statesman in Europe would have opened a diplomatic campaign by a personal visit to a country which was, or was about to be, the subject of dispute between his own and another State. The Emperor by this act shifted the whole balance of international politics, and placed

Morocco and  
the Anglo-  
French  
Entente.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

his own person in the forefront of the diplomatic struggle. He must by now know whether the innovation has been profitable or the reverse.

There were other changes in the policy and methods of Germany. Up to the end of Prince Hohenlohe's Chancellorship the Emperor's own outbursts had been the chief revelations to foreign Governments of German nervousness and of German schemes. Prince Hohenlohe had been succeeded in 1900 by a Chancellor who was as keen an adept in rhetorical fireworks as the Emperor himself. Prince Bülow's speeches must henceforth be read alongside of his Imperial Master's as a guide to aims and methods of German world-policy. It must not be supposed that the Emperor's visit to Tangier and the diplomatic action which it inaugurated met with the general approval of his people. There was always a widespread feeling of uneasiness regarding the

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

wisdom and expediency of the personal interventions of William II. and the rhetoric by which he emphasized them. Criticism was rife in the Press and in Parliament. It was the business of Prince Bülow, as long as he could, to shield the Imperial orator, and to try to reconcile the wilder ideas and actions of William II. with the more practical aims of the ruling class.

Thus, when challenged in the Reichstag as to the inconsistency between his own reassuring statement in April, 1904, on the harmlessness of the Anglo-French Morocco Agreement from

Prince  
Bülow and  
M. Delcassé

the German point of view, and the aggressive policy inaugurated a year later by the Emperor's visit to Tangier, the Chancellor frankly declared: "The language and the attitude of diplomatists are determined by circumstances. The moment which I consider to be suitable for defending our interests I must myself choose in

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

accordance with my own judgment. And in another speech Prince Bulow took full responsibility for the Imperial visit, which he himself had recommended. "The Emperor's visit to Tangier," he explained "exercised a useful influence by making the international character of the Morocco question clear to everyone. . . . The Emperor, by staking his own person for German interests and German prestige, earned, in my opinion, the gratitude of the country."

The eagerness with which the Emperor had thrown himself into the fray was, as usual, incommensurate with the results which his personal intervention secured. The fall of M. Delcassé bore at the time the appearance of a greater diplomatic success than it really was. The quarrel of the French people with him was that he had not ordered his policy with a due regard to the state of French military preparations.

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

William II., however, manifested the most extravagant delight on receiving the news of M. Delcassé's fall. He drove in hot haste to the residence of his Chancellor, and personally intimated to Count Bülow his elevation to the rank of Prince. Bismarck, as was remarked in the Berlin Press, had earned his honours somewhat less cheaply. But at this time the confidence of the Emperor in Bismarck's third successor knew no bounds, and no eulogy was too high for the man whom he familiarly addressed and spoke of as "Mein Bernhard."

The practical execution of the policy fulminantly proclaimed at Tangier encountered serious difficulties. In Great Britain, France, and Russia it was at once seen that German commercial interests in Morocco were not important enough to account for the sudden violence and aggressiveness of the Emperor's action. It was

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

the Anglo-French *entente* that was aimed at. The Emperor, during his visits to England, had chiefly witnessed the pacific aspects of British civilization. He had seen plenty of luxury and plenty of self-complacency. The masses seemed to his eye to be unwarlike and totally unorganized, as compared with his own "nation in arms." He had been treated by the leading sections of English society with extreme respect, and in some cases he had experienced foolish adulation. The traditions of Anglo-German friendship were still strong, and he did not believe that the new British friendship with France would stand the test of a crisis behind which lay the thinly veiled German menace of war. The mirage of his own rhetoric had blinded him to the real attitude of other European nations as well as to that of America. But the Algeiras Conference undeceived him—at any rate, for the time being. There was something like con-



## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

sternation in Berlin when it was perceived that England would stick to her guns and stand by France according to the letter and the spirit of her Agreement; that Russia, with no direct interests of her own, would support her ally; that Italy, both by inclination and on the ground of her Mediterranean understanding with France, would take the French view of the situation; and that the American plenipotentiary, Mr. White, did not fail to see through the ulterior schemes, and to protest against the dilatory methods of Germany from a point of view that was entirely disinterested as regards the questions at issue. The result of the Conference which Germany had forced upon the Western Powers, may have been to introduce for a time the "international bacillus" into the Morocco Question, but the Algeciras Act could not compensate William II. for the revelation that, except for Austria-Hungary

**German  
failure at  
Algeciras.**

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

—his “brilliant second” as he called her—he had found himself alone, and had perilously unmasked his larger designs. The Anglo-French *entente* was greatly strengthened by the ordeal it had undergone, and the foundations of the Anglo-Russian *entente* were laid by the co-operation of Great Britain and Russia in support of French interests. Moreover, the very events in the Far East upon which William II. had based his hopes of seeing Russia weakened in Europe and brought into conflict with England had produced precisely the contrary effects. It had become the interest of France to promote friendship between Great Britain and Russia in order to strengthen her own position after the result of the Russo-Japanese struggle. Japan herself had been brought into the orbit of European policy as a new Great Power, and, with a clear perception of the issues and of her own interests, she had associated

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

herself with the Powers of the Triple Entente. The general aspect of Europe after the diplomatic conflict was entirely different from what the German Emperor had desired and expected, and the remark frequently addressed in Berlin to the writer —“We could not stand another Algeciras” —was intelligible from the German point of view. Unfortunately for Germany, the action of the German Consulate at Casablanca in extending protection to deserters from the French Foreign Legion, and the diplomatic treatment of this provocative incident by the German Government, led to renewed difficulties. The firmness of France, and especially of the French Prime Minister, M. Clémenceau, secured a peaceful solution of the conflict; but it had become evident that French opinion was stiffening, and that any renewal of unreasonable German demands or of German provocations and menaces would imperil the

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

peace of Europe. The decision of The Hague Court in favour of France in the Casablanca incident gave a fresh check to aggressive German diplomacy. Demonstrative assurances of support which the Kaiser had given to the Sultan of Morocco, Abdul-Aziz, were of as little practical use to that potentate, as had been the Imperial telegram to Mr. Kruger. The fall of Abdul-Aziz was only a less striking commentary upon German world-policy than had been the refusal of the Emperor to receive Mr. Kruger in Berlin when the ex-President of the South African Republic, in flight from the Transvaal, was at Cologne on his way to Holland.

The final stage of the Morocco Question, so far as Germany was concerned, did not lead to any improvement in the international situation, but rather the reverse. The action of the German Government in suddenly sending the gunboat *Panther* to

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

Agadir on July 1, 1911, by way of reopening negotiations with France, was neither pacific in itself nor an augury of peace in the future. The moment chosen for this intervention was the eve of a visit of President Fallières, accompanied by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. de Selves, to the Queen of Holland. The absence of the Foreign Minister necessitated the temporary assumption of his duties by the French Prime Minister, M. Caillaux, and the course of the negotiations was radically influenced by this unfortunate situation. Herr von Kiderlen-Waechter, the German Foreign Secretary, utilized the embarrassments of France to the full, and, simultaneously with the official negotiations between him and the French Ambassador, M. Jules Cambon, there was an undercurrent of overtures and counter-proposals between Berlin and Paris through the instrumentality of M. Cail-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

laux and his financial agents. As M. Clémenceau remarked at the time: "Pour faire ce **Agadir.** que M. Caillaux a fait, il faut être à la fois un fou et un financier." The experiences of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, who, in July, 1909, had replaced Prince Bülow as Imperial Chancellor, may well have contributed to create in his mind that false impression of the attitude of French statesmen and of the French nation which in the great crisis of this summer (1914) led him to underestimate France's national spirit of loyalty, self-sacrifice, and devotion. There can hardly be any excuse for his mistake with regard to the policy and principles of Great Britain. During the last Morocco crisis Sir Edward Grey's dealings with the German Ambassador, Count Wolff Metternich, as recounted in his great speech in the House of Commons on November 27, 1911, had shown that the British Foreign Secretary was determined to uphold

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

British interests and the Anglo-French friendship at all costs. Mr. Lloyd George's address to the London Bankers at the Mansion House on July 6th of the same year had dispelled all doubt as to the attitude of the more Radical wing of the party in power. It is possible, however, that the unwearying and disinterested efforts which, throughout the Balkan peace negotiations, were made by Sir Edward Grey in behalf of European concord and co-operation were not wholly intelligible to the Prussian mind. The German Government had urged that the Powers of Europe should not go into the London Conference ranged under the standards of the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. The Powers of the Triple Entente loyally fulfilled this reasonable arrangement; Germany and Austria steadily violated it. As has so often happened, the Kaiser and his Ministers may have mistaken simple faith for weakness, and may

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

have concluded that there was no limit to the advantages which they might secure by their own breaches of their engagements.

The settlement of the Morocco crisis of 1911 was one of the worst products of modern diplomacy. It may have temporarily freed the hands of France for her task in Morocco, but the partition of the French Congo which it affected, with two horns of territory from the German Cameroons abutting upon the Congo River, manifestly established an untenable situation, and can only have been designed as a prelude to aggressive German action against the Congo Act and the Congo State. German designs upon the Colonies of France, which have since been openly confessed by the German Chancellor (White Paper on the European Crisis, No. 6), assuredly embraced the acquisition of France's reversionary rights to the Belgian Congo. Moreover, it seems probable that the invasion of



## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

Belgium and the destruction of her towns by the methods of the Huns was part of a plan for securing at the end of a successful war the surrender of Belgium's Congo possessions as the price of peace. The wholesale destruction of Belgium's economic resources, it was doubtless calculated, would render it impossible for her in any case to prosecute her great Central African enterprise.

The great events of 1912 and 1913 in the Balkans, and the position in which the collapse of the Turkish Empire in Europe and the successful operations of Servia, Greece, and Roumania against Bulgaria left the Near Eastern Question, vitally affected Austria-Hungary and the world-policy of William II. in so far as it was based upon Austrian influence over the Slavs of South-Eastern Europe. **The Balkan problem.** Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 was an event

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

which might not have seriously undermined the conditions of European peace if it had not been effected with a cynical disregard of treaty obligations which ushered in an era of international lawlessness, consummated the other day in the shameless violation of Belgian neutrality by Germany. Austria, by her thirty years' administration and development of the Turkish provinces entrusted to her by the Treaty of Berlin, had, apart from the initial ruthlessness of her methods, achieved a work of European civilization. And Europe, including Russia, would manifestly have condoned the irregular act of annexation, had Austria formally invited Europe to ratify that act. Supported and encouraged by William II., Austria did nothing of the kind. She, furthermore, made it clear that she was determined to choke the development of Servia, which, as the western outpost of independent Slavdom, has always

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

enjoyed the special protection of Russia. Above all, Austria opposed all access for Servia to the Adriatic. Public and official opinion in Russia was strained to the breaking-point, and Russian preparations followed closely upon Austrian mobilization. It was then that, according to the phrase of William II., Germany <sup>In "shining</sup> appeared in "shining armour" <sup>armour."</sup> beside her Austrian ally. Count Pourtalés, the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg, presented in March, 1909, what was practically an ultimatum to the Russian Government, and, in the interests of peace, Russia, who was already engaged in calming Servian excitement and modifying Servian demands, made it clear to Servia that she would not engage in hostilities in support of her cause. It might have been expected that a monarch who, like William II., has always boasted of his pacific endeavours, would have rendered the subsequent situation as easy as possible

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

for Russia, and would have abstained from open exultation over the success of his intervention. But that was not in the nature of the man. He paid a visit to Vienna in September, 1910, and in reply to an address from the Burgomaster, he indulged in one of his most characteristic outbursts, in the course of which he said: "I believe I may interpret your resolution as conveying approval of the action of Austria's ally when at an anxious moment he placed himself in shining armour by the side of your most gracious Sovereign."

The inner history of the negotiations that preceded the outbreak of the Great War on August 4, 1914, will probably not be fully known until the issue of that world-struggle has been decided. It may safely be assumed, however, and has been implicitly admitted, that, from the date of the German intervention at St. Petersburg in 1909, the German and Austrian Governments

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

were steadily contemplating the prospect of drawing the sword. Austria, however, could not justly complain that her interests had been compromised by the decisions of the European Concert, which set up between Serbia and the sea an independent Albania, under the protection of the Powers, and Germany could not allege that her voice in the counsels of the nations had not been sufficiently regarded. The prospect of preserving peace seemed hopeful up to the tragedy of the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenburg, at Sarajevo on June 28th. That unforeseen event fired the powder-magazine and destroyed the hopes of peace. But the reason why it proved fatal to peace was because the calculations of Germany and Austria had already reckoned the moment to be favourable for a war of aggression. The personal part which William II. played

**Assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand.**

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

in the final catastrophe has not yet been fully elucidated. There is evidence, however, that the war fever took possession of him and that he cast aside the restraints of political sanity with the mask of the peacemaker. It is stated that his return to Berlin on July 26th was viewed with apprehension by his own Foreign Office. His political staff knew from repeated experience how perilous was his intervention at moments of grave crises. His theories of Divine Right, and the desire once more to appear in "shining armour" with his ally as the avenger of an abominable crime, had doubtless inflamed his imagination. The war party around him—and not least among them, as appears from the White Paper, the German Ambassador in Vienna, Herr von Tschirschky—fanned the flame of his ungovernable wrath. His Chancellor appears to have lost his balance of mind (Sir E.

The outbreak of the Great War.

## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

Goschen's *Report*). The difference between the cooler type of German diplomatist and the Imperial firebrand is strikingly revealed by the German Foreign Secretary Herr von Jagow's apologies and regrets for the attack of the mob on the British Embassy and the Emperor's unqualifiable message to Sir E. Goschen.

The Emperor, on the morning after the assault upon the British Embassy, sent an aide-de-camp to Sir Edward Goschen to deliver the following message: "The Emperor has charged me to express to your Excellency his regret for the occurrences of last night, but to tell you at the same time that you will gather from these occurrences an idea of the feelings of his people respecting the action of Great Britain in joining with other nations against her old allies of Waterloo. His Majesty also begs that you will tell the King that he has been proud of the titles of British Field-Marshal

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

and British Admiral, but that, in consequence of what has occurred, he must now at once divest himself of these titles."

Sir Edward Goschen mentions in his despatch that the acerbity of the Emperor's message lost nothing from the manner of its delivery.

William II. ought to have realized, and his Ambassador in St. Petersburg ought to have informed him, that no "shining armour" or other means of persuasion could induce the great Russian Empire to capitulate a second time before German and Austrian menaces. Count Pourtalés's demeanour on the rejection of his ultimatum by M. Sasanoff showed that he had misread the situation. Did William II. misread it? As regards Great Britain, his behaviour to the British Ambassador furnishes proof that he had been labouring under grave delusions as to the national spirit of this country and its sense of honour. As re-



## WILLIAM II. AND WORLD-POLICY

guards Russia and France, it is more probable that his reading of the situation made him underestimate their state of preparedness for war. The trial of Mme. Caillaux, and the revelations in the French Senate as to the deficient supplies of ammunition and equipment, doubtless convinced him that France was neither in the mood nor in a position to take up his challenge; and as for Belgium, the barbarities practised by his Huns furnish a criterion of the shock which he must have received from the unexpected resistance offered by the brave Belgians in defence of their violated frontiers. Whatever the issue of the Great War may prove as to the foresight of the German General Staff—and the evidence of events has hitherto (in the middle of September) been against them—the calculations of German diplomacy have singularly miscarried, and the attitude and

The old and  
the new  
Bismarckianism.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

actions of William II. have contributed more than anything else to its discomfiture. Bismarck did not stop at what was little short of a forgery of the Ems despatch in order to secure a diplomatic advantage at the outbreak of the war of 1870, but he at any rate succeeded. In 1864 and 1866 he managed by masterly diplomacy to isolate his prey. Great Britain and France stood aside while he crushed Denmark, and acquired Schleswig-Holstein, with the naval base of Kiel, for Prussia. Napoleon III. allowed Austria to be reduced to the rank of a "brilliant second" at Königgrätz. In 1870 the Tsar, Alexander II., in the presence of his troops, embraced the Prussian Military Attaché in the Kremlin when he received the news of Sedan. Where, in any quarter of the globe, unless it be in Constantinople, is there a Government that would to-day rejoice at a German victory? And what would Bismarck have

## WILLIAM I. AND WORLD-POLICY

thought of the German diplomacy which simultaneously arrayed against Germany a coalition like that of Great Britain, France, Russia, and Japan, together with an outraged Belgium and a Servia fighting victoriously for her very existence? What would the great manipulator of moral *imponderabilia* have said to the policy of beginning a world-conflict with a breach of international obligations and a public confession of "wrong-doing." "Mit Gott für Kaiser und Unrecht!" The *débâcle* of German policy at the end of July and the beginning of August, 1914, is enough to make Bismarck turn in his grave.

## VI

### THE LAST STAGE

THE tragedy of William II.'s reign is scarcely the less impressive because the central figure is not cast in an heroic mould. His genius is imitative rather than original, and his methods are too theatrical and rhetorical to be heroic. As a young man he was indulged by public opinion, because the mistakes of the young are proverbially educative, and are, therefore, forgiven. As the years have whitened the Emperor's hair, and drawn the lines of his face into an expression of strain and almost of alarm, the world has been disappointed in the development of his character. At the age of fifty-five he has to some extent, it is true,

## THE LAST STAGE

undergone the chastening influence of his surroundings. His sons have grown into manhood, and the eldest, the Crown Prince, has once and again retributively asserted himself after the manner of William II. in the ninety-nine days of the Emperor Frederick's reign. There is generally a "Crown Prince's party" in Prussia. Frederick the Great was imprisoned by his father, Frederick William I., at Custrin, and narrowly missed sharing the fate of his fellow-conspirator, von Katte, who was beheaded. The Emperor Frederick was the most pacific of Heirs Apparent, but his popularity and his Liberalist friendships made him suspect to Prussian Junkerdom, and he was for a time in disgrace. The present Crown Prince has displayed far greater liveliness and considerably less wisdom than most of his predecessors. His demonstrative behaviour in the Royal gallery of the Reichstag during a debate on

The Crown Prince.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

Anglo-German relations was not a reassuring exhibition even for the enemies of England, and the Imperial Chancellor had to receive satisfaction by the temporary removal of the Heir Apparent from the capital. His intervention in the Brunswick succession question against his own brother-in-law, the son of the Duke of Cumberland, was exceedingly inconvenient both to the Emperor and to the Government, and it entailed elaborate explanations in the semi-official Press. In the unspeakable Eulenburg case, which for many months cast a cloud as from the Dead Sea over Germany, the Crown Prince's action met with more general approval; but his initiative in submitting to the Emperor Herr Maximilian Harden's articles on the Eulenburg scandal was really prompted by his military comrades at Potsdam. They resented the stern measures adopted for weeding out unnatural vice in certain crack cavalry regi-

## THE LAST STAGE

ments, while the same vice, according to Harden's indictment, was flourishing unpunished and undenounced among the clique, headed by Prince Philip Eulenburg, which claimed to influence the Emperor. Prince Bülow commented on the Crown Prince's intervention as follows in the Reichstag on November 28, 1907: "When it is asked why the Imperial Chancellor did not inform the Emperor sooner, I reply that it was only last spring that any actual facts, or, indeed, anything tangible, were brought to my knowledge. It is suggested that, at any rate, the articles in the *Zukunft* (Herr Harden's periodical), advancing grave charges against certain persons closely connected with the Court, might have been submitted to the Emperor. Gentlemen, the illustrious Prince who stands so near to the throne was justified in taking that course. The Crown Prince performed an act of filial duty

The Eulenburg scandal.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

towards his Imperial father, and acted in the interests of the country when he called his father's attention to those attacks. His action was not official; it was not an act of State. A responsible Minister was in a different position." At the same time Prince Bülow denied the existence of an alleged Court "Camarilla," and pointed out that the Sovereigns in history who had been under the influence of Camarillas had invariably been rulers who shut themselves off from the world and lacked independence of character. No one had ever suggested that William II. lived a retired life, or that he exhibited any lack of independence.

The Emperor was deeply shocked by the disclosures in the Eulenburg case, and was manifestly suffering from a nervous strain, from which he has never completely recovered. He sought rest and a change of scene in England for some weeks, and resided



## THE LAST STAGE

at Highcliffe. It was there that the conversations took place, the gist of which was embodied in the *Daily Telegraph* interview intended to wile British opinion back into the orbit of German policy. The Emperor's arguments have already been discussed (p. 123). It remains to recall the political effects of the publication in Germany. Prince Bülow was called to account by a host of interpellations from all political sections in the Reichstag. In his reply the Chancellor admitted that the publication of the interview had not produced the desired impression in England, and that it had caused great pain and regret in Germany. He was convinced that, in view of these results, "The Emperor would in future maintain, even in private conversations, that reserve which is indispensable both in the interests of a consistent policy, and also for the authority of the Crown." He acknowledged that a mistake had been

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

committed in the Foreign Office when the interview was allowed to go to the *Daily Telegraph* in the form in which it had manifestly been approved by the Emperor. On the publication of the interview he himself had at once tendered his resignation, but, in accordance with His Majesty's desire, had agreed to continue in office—a decision which had been the gravest and most difficult that he had ever taken during his political career. It was subsequently announced that, after Prince Bülow had informed the Emperor of the feeling which prevailed among the German people, His Majesty had solemnly declared that: "Without allowing himself to be disconcerted by the exaggerations of public criticism, which he felt to be unjust, he regarded it as his chief Imperial duty to secure consistency in the policy of the Empire while preserving constitutional responsibilities."

## THE LAST STAGE

The Emperor's undertaking amounted to a promise that he would indulge in no more perilous declarations and demonstrations without the constitutional advice and assent of his Chancellor, and for nearly two years William II. kept his word. It was only some time after the retirement of Prince Bülow (July, 1909)—whom, according to many accounts, he never forgave for abandoning him—that he again began to make declarations of his personal policy in home and foreign affairs, including the “shining armour” speech in Vienna.

It is convenient to deal here once for all with the delusion which has been widespread in Great Britain and even in France, that William II. was a “preserver of peace;” that, as it was often put by himself and by others, he had “preserved the peace of Europe for nearly twenty-seven years”—*i.e.*, during the period of his reign. It is not true that the conduct of the Emperor

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

throughout this period tended to the maintenance of peace. On the contrary, his violent initiatives—the Kruger telegram, the visit to Tangier, the Agadir demonstration, the two ultimatums to Russia—were acts which were eminently calculated to plunge Europe into war, and indeed, in their cumulative effects, have brought about the greatest war in history. The whole tone of his innumerable public speeches and private outbursts showed the same tendency. It was only the constant efforts of European statesmen, backed in some instances, as must be acknowledged, by those of their German colleagues, and more than once by

The “pre-server of peace.”

the repentant exertions of the Emperor himself, that so long saved the situation. The French theory was that William II.’s bark was worse than his bite, and that, in the last resort, he would always be found on the side of peace. The time has, perhaps, not

## THE LAST STAGE

yet come to decide how far the Emperor was conscious of the effect of his own wild words. If he realized the perils he was conjuring up, he was undoubtedly the greatest enemy of peace that Europe has known for a century. If he did not know what he was doing, the responsibility of the German nation and its statesmen for having tolerated such madness is immeasurable. Reasonable Germans have frequently admitted that if the practice of sudden and alarming utterances and actions had been adopted by other European Sovereigns or leading statesmen, the peace of Europe would not have been worth a day's purchase. In order that peace might be maintained, William II. had to be regarded as a chartered libertine in the realm of foreign politics; while there was always the dread probability that one day or another he would perpetrate some irrevocable folly, and, as it has unhappily turned out, involve the civilized world in the direst

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

calamities. Prince Bülow publicly acknowledged that it was impossible to carry on the affairs of *Germany* unless the Emperor refrained from his demonstrative ebullitions of temper and sentiment. The fourth German Chancellor, in his heart of hearts, must have known that the same thing was true of the affairs of *Europe* and the interests of international peace.

The Emperor's likes and dislikes, his moods, his enthusiasms, were all alike perilous when they were made the subject of his fiery orations. His overtures to foreign countries were generally as tactless as his challenges. He overdid everything. At the time of the Chinese international expedition he took one of the French Commanders, General Bonnal, to a regimental mess in Berlin, and toasted him and the French Army, thus compelling that French officer, whose words must have stuck in his throat, to toast in reply, "The

## THE LAST STAGE

German Army and its Soldier-Emperor.” He desired to cultivate, for ends best known to himself, the Dutch people and the Royal House of the Netherlands. On one occasion he telegraphed directly to the then Queen-Regent of Holland, and suggested that his sappers, who were breaking up the ice on the German Rhine, should continue their work beyond the Dutch frontier. Queen Emma wisely replied that such matters could best be discussed between the Foreign Offices of the two countries, and, needless to say, nothing came of the Emperor’s suggestion. He once informed the Tsar that a Russian village not far from Romin-ten in East Prussia, where he (William II.) has a shooting-box, had been burned down, and that he wished to give charitable aid to the villagers. The Tsar thanked him, and accepted his offer. Thereupon the Kaiser in uniform, and with a considerable suite, galloped, without notice, across the Russian

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

frontier to the burned village, and in person distributed his alms. The frontier guards were astounded, and did not know what to do. The object of the demonstration was as manifest as the idea of it was childish. The Kaiser desired to show what liberties he could take in Russia, and on what terms of confidence he stood with the Tsar. If the Tsar had been foolish enough to enter Germany in like fashion, there would have been an outcry in the patriotic German Press for months, and the climax would probably have been a fiery oration by William II. The puerility—there is no other word for it—of the Emperor's methods was constantly exemplified. When he was at Damascus in 1898 he could not refrain from giving expression to his nebulous ideas of exploiting Mohammedan feeling for the promotion of his world-policy. He therefore wound up an extraordinary speech in which there was



## THE LAST STAGE

a reference to "the Great Sultan Saladin" by exclaiming: "May the Sultan (Abdul-Hamid), and may the three hundred millions of Mohammedans throughout the world who reverence him as their Caliph, be assured that at all times the German Emperor will be their friend!" The few Mohammedans who may have heard of that speech may, in course of time, have reflected that from the "friend" of Mr. Kruger, of Abdul-Hamid, and of Abdul-Aziz, there was, perhaps, if experience taught anything, very little to be gained or hoped for.

The friend of Islam aspired to be at the same time the Kaiser of Roman Catholicism, and the High Protector of Protestantism throughout the world. His speeches at the dedication of the German *Erlöserkirche* (Church of the Redeemer) in Jerusalem and at Bethlehem revealed these ambitions. He even issued in 1903 a kind of encyclical, *Babel und Bibel*, on his own

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

religious views, and declared, among other things, that he recognized two kinds of revelation, the favoured channels of one of these kinds having been, among others, the Babylonian lawgiver Hammurabi, Moses, Abraham, Homer, Charlemagne, Luthér, Shakespeare, Kant, and "the Emperor William the Great," his own grandfather! He preached sermons to the crew of the Imperial yacht *Hohenzollern*, and compared the German struggle in China to the battle of the Israelites with the Amalekites. Behind the hosts of his troops he wanted to organize a "host of suppliants," praying like Moses with uplifted hands for victory. Keen controversy was excited even in Germany by a speech at Aix-la-Chapelle, in which the Kaiser asserted that Pope Leo XIII. to whom he paid repeated visits, had described Germany as "the *only* country in Europe . . . where every Catholic can devote himself freely and without interference to

## THE LAST STAGE

his religion," and had added that "he owed this to the German Emperor." German Catholics were the first to challenge the authenticity of the words attributed to the Pope, and the Emperor's own special Envoy, General von Loë, gently corrected the Imperial declarations. This was by no means the only occasion upon which William II. attempted to make political capital out of his personal relations with the Vatican. One of the most extraordinary instances was an appeal which he made to the Poles at Gnesen on September 8, 1905, with a view to enlisting their strong Catholicism in support of his Prussianizing policy. Leo XIII., shortly before his death in the previous year, had received the Emperor, who now reported that the Pope had said to him: "I swear and solemnly promise to Your Majesty in the name of the Catholics who are your subjects that they will always

The patron  
of all  
religions.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

be faithful subjects of the German Emperor and the King of Prussia." Turning to the members of the Cathedral Chapter at Gnesen, William II. exclaimed: "It is for you to give effect to the words of the aged Pontiff *so that he may not after his death prove to be forsworn (wortbrüchig) in the assurances which he gave to the German Emperor.*"

There seemed, indeed, to be no limit to the Kaiser's assumption that he could muster religious and social influences throughout the whole world in support of the aims which happened to be uppermost in his mind. In June, 1902, he invited deputations of the British Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, of the Deutschherren Order from Vienna, and of similar organizations, to a chapter and a banquet of the German Order of St. John, held in the restored stronghold of the Teutonic Knights at Marienburg on the Vistula. Lord Breadal-

## THE LAST STAGE

bane was at the head of the British deputation. It might have been thought that on such an occasion the Emperor would avoid controversial topics, but he again had his own axe to grind. After referring to the Marienburg as the ancient German bulwark against the hordes of the East, he exclaimed: "Once more the old situation confronts us. Polish arrogance is attempting to challenge the German race, and I am compelled to call upon my people to defend its national heritage. Here in the Marienburg I give voice to my expectation that all the brethren of the Order of St. John will always be ready when I call upon them to champion German ways and German manners" (*deutsche Art und Sitte*). It was, perhaps, fortunate that, as the Emperor afterwards discovered, the only member of the British deputation who understood German was stone-deaf!

At the time of the last Indian famine it

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

occurred to the Emperor that he might familiarize the Indian mind with the existence of himself and his Empire by starting a separate German subscription to the Famine Fund. There was no one in Germany who had thought of subscribing to that fund, but the Emperor issued a private appeal, which, coming from him, was in the nature of a command, to a number of Berlin bankers, and some £15,000 was subscribed. This contribution he sent direct to Lord Curzon, who was then Viceroy. He thus managed to bring about one of his favourite exchanges of telegrams, which were duly published, and really represented a calculated avoidance of the proper channels of communication with the dependency of a foreign Power.

The real nature of the Emperor's feelings towards Great Britain has often been discussed. On the occasion of some of his violent outbursts against this country, the

## THE LAST STAGE

writer has called the attention of Germans, who were supposed to know the mind of William II., to the inconsistency between those attacks and his repeated professions of sympathy with British life and British ideals. The reply frequently was that if the Emperor was "angry" with Great Britain it was a case of *le dépit amoureux*. He really loved and admired England, and would have liked nothing better than to transfer many British customs and ways of life to his own country. What he resented was the lack of appreciation with which his efforts were regarded in England, and the absence of any reciprocity on the British side in adopting certain German conceptions and practices, the superiority of which was an article of faith with him.

It would, perhaps, be nearest the truth to say that the Emperor's mental attitude towards us was a mixture of admiration, jealousy, and radical inability to under-

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

stand English ways. British home politics in particular were a sealed book to him; and here his ignorance was excusable in view of the way in which British political parties

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Attitude | malign and misunderstand one              |
| towards  | another. But in other spheres he          |
| Great    | was handicapped by the German             |
| Britain. | habit of rapid generalization which is at |

once the strength and the weakness of German educational and political methods. Many a German will reel you off in five minutes an exhaustive characterization of the state of England, based upon newspaper reports of British backwardness in education, in business methods, in military efficiency, and in general culture. In a sledge-hammer German review of so slight a subject as the farce, *Charlie's Aunt*, the writer once found it stated that "English literature has only twice flowered: it produced Shakespeare and Byron, and the rest is a barren wilderness." That sweep-



## THE LAST STAGE

ing survey doubtless represented the extent of the critic's knowledge. The essential commonplaceness of the Emperor's mind in its most extravagant flights was revealed by estimates scarcely less absurd than that which has been quoted. He, no doubt, tried to imitate England in some of the more superficial aspects of English life. The Imperial Yacht Club and the Kiel Regatta represented attempts to transplant or to rival Cowes. At one time the Kaiser sought to establish a Hyde Park parade in the Berlin Thiergarten. For a few weeks there was an afternoon procession of Royal and other carriages, more or less "smart"—it was before the days of motor-cars—in the Siegesallee, the short avenue in which he has erected the extraordinary lines of marble statuary representing his predecessors on the throne. The performance was as artificial and as dull as could be imagined, and was soon abandoned.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

William II. has been described as the most modern of Sovereigns, but nothing is more remarkable than the way in which he has attempted to combine American up-to-dateness in material things with mediæval symbolism in his own intellectual world and in his personal appeals to his people. His patronage of literature, art, and the drama has been vitiated by preconceived ideas of the most elementary and retrograde character which he would like to impose upon the literary and artistic production of his country. In celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Empire, he invited the German Sovereigns and the special Envoys to witness a play by Ernest von Wildenbruch, the production of which he himself had superintended. The play was entitled *Willehalm*, and it endeavoured, by means of a crude symbolism, expressive of still cruder political conceptions, to depict Bis-

## THE LAST STAGE

marck's work of unification as having been accomplished by a mediæval figure in "shining armour," who represented "William the Great." The audience could scarcely conceal its yawns, and the whole production was resented as an intolerable infliction. When the two-hundredth anniversary of the Berlin Academy was celebrated in the presence of representatives from all the learned Societies of Europe, the Emperor received the Academy and its guests in the White Hall of the Castle. On the steps of the throne on which he was seated there were arranged a number of open folio volumes bound in brown leather, some globes, and other symbols of learning and science, the whole being contrived as if to reproduce the frontispiece of some eighteenth-century encyclopædia. It used to be thought that the romantic period of the "buff jerkin" and the "coat of mail" in literature had

Pageantry  
and policy.

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

passed away with Sir Walter Scott and his imitators. William II. revived it as part of his political pageantry. The revival jarred upon the æsthetic sense of his more cultured subjects, but he was, perhaps, not far wrong in calculating that it could still appeal to the German masses. His speeches are steeped in the same atmosphere. Their intellectual level is not high, and their literary style is flamboyant and forced. Their significance is derived from the position of the orator, and therein also lay their peril for the development of the German peoples' and for the peace of the world.

At times it seemed as if the speaker had some faint inkling of the responsibility which he incurred, and of the dangers which he was preparing for his country and for civilization. In a speech at Bremen (March 22, 1905), the Kaiser spoke of his determination to multiply "bayonets and

## THE LAST STAGE

cannon" in order to protect the acquisitions of his predecessors against the envy and jealousy of the foreigner. He proceeded: "The Fleet is afloat and it is being built, and there is plenty of material to man it. Its zeal and the spirit are those by which the officers of the Prussian Army were inspired at Hohenfriedberg, Königgrätz, and Sedan; and every German warship that is launched constitutes a fresh pledge for peace on earth. It will ever become less likely that our adversaries will try a fall with us, and we shall constantly become more valuable as allies." Yet in the midst of this tirade the Imperial orator graciously condescended to give an assurance that he did not contemplate any vast conquests. "I have sworn to myself, on the ground of what I have learnt from history, that I will never strive after an empty dominion over the world [*Weltherr-*

A new  
"World-  
Empire."

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

*schaft*]. For what became of the great so-called World-Empires? Alexander the Great, Napoleon I., all the great heroes of war swam in blood, and left behind them nations that were enslaved, nations which at the first opportunity rose again and brought about the dissolution of those Empires. The World-Empire which I have dreamed for myself is to be this: the new German Empire above all is to enjoy the most absolute confidence as a quiet, honest, peaceable neighbour. And if history, perhaps, may one day tell of a German World-Empire, or of a Hohenzollern dominion over the world [*Hohenzollernweltherrschaft*], it will be one that has been founded, not upon conquests by the sword, but by means of reciprocal confidence between nations with like aims—in a word, as a great poet [Goethe] says: ‘Bounded without, unbounded within.’ ”

With what feelings does the Emperor

## THE LAST STAGE

to-day contemplate the prospect of such a "Hohenzollern world-dominion," when, like Alexander the Great and Napoleon I., he is, to use his own expression, "swimming in blood."

There are two more speeches of the Kaiser's which bear upon the present situation (September, 1914), and with a reference to which these pages may conclude. The first illustrates the value of his professions of friendship in the light of his subsequent deeds. From October 25 to 27, 1910, the Emperor and Empress were hospitably entertained by the King and Queen of the Belgians, and by the municipality of Brussels. Replying to King Albert's toast, the Emperor said: "The splendid reception which your Majesties and the Belgian people have accorded us in this glorious capital has profoundly touched us, and it makes our gratitude the more cordial that we see in this reception the expression of

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

the close ties which connect not only our families, but also our peoples. It is with the friendliest sympathy that I and all Germany watch the stupendous success which has been vouchsafed to the untiring energy of the Belgian people in every branch of commerce and industry. . . . Belgium's trade embraces the whole world, and it is in

**William II.  
and Belgium  
in 1910.** the peaceful labours of civilization that Germans and Belgians everywhere meet. We are filled

with equal admiration by the cultivation of ideal interests, in which Belgium's poets and artists have achieved so eminent a place. May the relations of confidence and friendly neighbourliness, of which the negotiations between our Governments recently furnished so welcome a proof, be drawn ever closer! May welfare and blessing be shed by your Majesty's reign upon your Royal house and upon your people! That is my desire, which springs



## THE LAST STAGE

from the depths of my heart. Hurrah for their Majesties, the King and Queen of the Belgians!”

On the following day the Emperor visited the Hôtel de Ville, and, addressing the brave Burgomaster, M. Max, who has since distinguished himself by standing between the German army of occupation and the defenceless citizens of Brussels, thanked him for the splendid reception in “this gem of architecture and treasury of historical memories.” The Emperor rejoiced “to salute the city of Brussels, the centre of a land which is distinguished by the sober and industrious character of its population.” He congratulated Brussels upon the success of her international Exhibition, and asked the Burgomaster to convey to the city “our profound gratitude and our warmest wishes for its prosperity, and for a happy future.”

And to-day? The answer may be found

## BUILDER AND BLUNDERER

in another of the Emperor's own speeches. He was endeavouring to illustrate the loyalty of the Dutch population to the House of Orange, the connection of his ancestry with which he frequently—"for reasons of his own," no doubt—emphasizes. He accordingly related the following story of what he described as a touching incident:

"A Dutch peasant woman with her little children once approached the house, in the walls of which were to be seen the bullet-holes made by the assassin's shot that killed William of Orange. When the old woman came to the place, she turned to her children, and, pointing with her finger, said: 'Dat is Wilhelm!'"

The story will now have a different application. For generations to come, when travellers from all quarters of the globe visit Louvain, and Malines, and Dinant, and are shown traces of the ravages wrought by the

## THE LAST STAGE

Huns of the year 1914, they may well exclaim in the words of the old peasant woman:

“THAT IS WILHELM!”